Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIX, Issue No. 3 | SATURDAY JANUARY 3, 2009 | www.saipantribune.com | 50¢

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Do you support the SEDC proposal to eliminate all poker machines in the CNMI, except those at licensed casinos, by June 30, 2009?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

95 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

Rose Parade

Spectators who claimed their spots for the Rose Parade hours before it began were rewarded Thursday with spangled dancers paying tribute to Broadway.

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YouTube Star

Beyonce's video for "If I Were a Boy" has been watched by more than 34 million on YouTube.

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Benavente: Selection for running mate ongoing. PAGE 5

Three babies greet 2009

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The New Year began on a particularly bright note for three women in the Commonwealth, who welcomed their babies into the world on Jan. 1.

The first baby of the year was born minutes after the clock struck midnight.

Ann Marie Skilang Marciano, 23, and her boyfriend Michael Ayuyu, 24, welcomed Crisha Rose Sinako Ayuyu Marciano at 12:21am. She weighed in at 6 pounds 6.2 ounces.

Marciano, who went into labor

See THREE on Page 4

KRISTI EATON
Ann Marie Skilang Marciano holds her newborn baby Crisha Rose Sinako Ayuyu Marciano. Crisha was the first baby born at the Commonwealth Health Center in 2009.

CUC emergency extended—again

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

For the sixth straight month, Gov. Benigno Fitial has placed the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. under a state of disaster emergency, adding new findings and conclusions justifying the need for the declaration.

Fitial

The latest declaration was signed Dec. 31 and will last for 31 days.

Press secretary Charles Reyes has said CUC will most likely remain under a state of emergency as long as the emergency Aggreko generators are in place. The order suspends procurement regulations for CUC, allowing the utility company to retain the generators and any other equipment or supplies necessary to maintain reliable power. It also suspends local environmental regulations.

There are now 11 reasons Fitial said

See CUC on Page 4

Another tourist drowns

Victim reportedly fell from Tinian cliff line

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A Korean tourist drowned after falling from the cliff line at Dump Coke, a fishing area on Tinian, Tuesday night, according to the Department of Public Safety yesterday.

Hoseung Joung, 29, was transported to the Tinian Health Center where he was pronounced dead at 11:25pm due to fluid in the lungs.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Fireworks explode over the skies of Saipan in this picture taken from the hill behind the Commonwealth Health Center in Garapan, ushering the New Year. The islands welcomed the new year with muted celebrations and less grandiose fireworks due to the economic recession that continues to grip the Commonwealth.

REY BELGADO

Local

There's more to Hermès than signature bags

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

A leather craftsman from Paris, France, is just about to complete his nine-day visit here, demonstrating the art of making a signature bag by hand-stitching at the Hermès Boutique of the DFS Galleria Saipan.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune*, Guillaume Dulatillion shared his knowledge and skills and some amazing information about Hermès as a world-renowned company.

He also talked about the opportunities that his company offers.

For instance, Dulatillion said they currently lack the manpower to supply the increasing demand for Hermès products.

"There's really a big demand from Japan, Russia and China. Our customers are willing to wait for three years to get the bag they want, even if it costs $8,000. Isn't that amazing?" Dulatillion said through volunteer translator Kazuyo Tojo.

The company is currently training and hiring interested people, especially the youth, to become experts in making Hermès leather products.

Students, however, undergo a difficult process because of the intricacies of making a signature product. The students spend 13 months before they can learn the proper techniques of making handcrafted leather products.

Dulatillion explained that each year some 250 people enroll for the class and after a year, about 90 percent quit the job.

Kazuyo said that in Dulatillion's case, the class went down to 15 students and "he was one of the lucky ones."

The 40-year-old Dulatillion said it's not just the intricate process that matters but the company also makes sure that the health of the craftsman is taken into consideration.

He said that even the position of the craftsman should have its own pattern and not just for the sake of stitching. He also talked about the importance of knowing the materials and their particular nuances.

The most difficult bag to do is the Kelly Sellier, he said, because it requires special skills and special techniques.

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.

Guillaume Dulatillion, a leather craftsman from Paris, France shows the intricate way of hand-stitching a signature bag at the Hermes Boutique of DFS Galleria Saipan.

Some of the materials are from skin of calf, crocodile, lizard and other animals.

The most expensive bag on sale on Saipan is worth $26,000, made of crocodile skin and patterned with diamonds.

The company also accepts special orders.

Dulatillion said the interior of the most expensive car in the world today, a Buggati Veyron FGB, is made by Hermes. The car is worth $2.2 million.

He said the company also made the interior design of a private helicopter, a house, including its tables and chairs.

"There is so much demand," he said.

Dulatillon arrived on Saipan on Dec. 27. He will finish the demonstration on Jan. 4.

Those who have Hermès bags that need to be repaired may bring their bags to him so he could bring the items to France, where the maker of the bags will fix them and then ship them back to Saipan.

Island notables to attend Sablan's swearing in

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and outgoing CNMI Resident Rep. Pete A. Tenorio are among the current and former Northern Marianas officials invited to witness Delegate-elect Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan as he takes his oath of office as the Commonwealth's first-ever representative to the U.S. Congress.

All members of the incoming 111th Congress will be sworn-in on Thursday, Jan. 6, 2009.

According to a news release issued by Sablan's office, Fitial, Tenorio and Chief Justice Miguel S. Demapan have accepted invitations to the historic event. The governor will bring his wife, Josie.

Sablan invited both Senate President Pete Reyes and Speaker of the House Arnold I. Palacios, but neither will attend.

U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi will preside over the ceremonial event in the Rayburn Room just off the main floor of the House of Representatives.

Sablan has also invited a number of men who have been instrumental in developing the political relationship between the United States and the Northern Marianas.

Invitee Edward DLG. Pangelinan was the chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, which negotiated the Covenant of Political Union during the mid-1970s. Pangelinan also served as the first resident representative to the United States, a position that will cease to exist when Sablan becomes a member of the U.S. Congress.

Sablan

Tenorio, who as the current resident representative was directly involved in the passage last year of U.S. Public Law 110-229—the law creating the new Northern Marianas Delegate position—is another of the important CNMI leaders who will be present. Tenorio has a long career in elected office, including service on the Marianas Political Status Commission and as a two-term lieutenant governor.

Howard P. Willens, who provided legal services to the Commission during its negotiations with the U.S. government and is co-author of several books chronicling the creation of the Commonwealth, has also accepted an invitation to the event. Willens now serves as special legal counsel to Fitial and helps with the lawsuit that the governor has filed against the federal government to contest the labor provisions of the new immigration law.

"It is an honor to be representing the people of the Northern Marianas on this historic day," Sablan said in a statement. "And I am particularly thankful that so many of the CNMI's leaders have chosen to recognize the importance of this day by traveling to Washington to be present."

Family and friends will accompany Sablan for his swearing in. Wife Andrea, son Jesse and daughter Patricia are all traveling to be with Sablan when he takes his oath office.

Sablan has also invited his friend and niece Merced Aldan-Ada to be present and his uncle Joe Borja. James D. Livingstone, a former assistant attorney general in the Northern Marianas, who served as counsel to the Commonwealth Election Commission while Sablan was executive director and who is now a prosecuting attorney with the State of Massachusetts, is another of Sablan's friends who will be on hand.

9 in 10 overstayers were hired in past 6 years

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Nine in 10 of the overstaying aliens in the Commonwealth were hired over the past six years, when the local economy has been on a spiral downturn and joblessness has gone rampant, according to the Department of Labor.

Cinta Kaipat, deputy secretary at the Labor Department, in a Dec. 31, 2008, report to the Legislature, said that over 90 percent of the estimated 650 foreign worker overstayers are believed to be among those who entered the Commonwealth during the years 2003 through 2008.

The estimate is based on Phase II of the Department's overstayer review project. Phase I of the project, which involves quarterly reviews of the 2008 records, is ongoing. Phase III covers records from the years 1996 through 2002, and Phase IV covers the years 1985 through 1995.

"Although foreign workers have been present in the Commonwealth in significant numbers since 1985 (a 24-year period), and the department's Phase II project goes back only to 2003, in the years prior to 2003 (a six-year period), there were generally jobs available for workers whose contracts were not renewed by their employers," the report says.

It adds, "Unemployment is the largest single reason for workers falling into overstayer status. Because there was little unemployment among foreign workers in the years 1985 through 2002, we anticipate that when we complete the Phase III and Phase IV reviews, there will be relatively few overstayers from those years."

The report also notes that the Commonwealth had an amnesty program prior to 2002, which converted some workers from overstayer status to legal status. The DOL, according to the report, expects the number of actual overstayers from among those who entered in years 2003 to 2008, and who are currently still in the Commonwealth, will continue to decrease over time because of voluntary departures and deportations.

A list published by the DOL on Dec. 1, 2008, includes 624 overstayers from the years 2003 through 2007. Another list for the first quarter of 2008 shows 25 overstayers. The DOL expects to publish the lists for the second and third quarters of 2008 soon.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

CARMENT T. ANDON and SAMUEL M. ANDON (collectively "Trustor"), on or about October 22, 2004, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on November 2, 2004, under Document No. 04-2544 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 011 G 308, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 797 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 011 G 06, DATED DECEMBER 9, 1993, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 93-4414, DATED DECEMBER 16, 1993, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its 2nd Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$43,730.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009,** at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$43,730.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By: _____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency

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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

NOVA ANN T. QUITUGUA and RAY J. TAITAGUE (collectively "Trustor"), on or about September 24, 1998, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on September 28, 1998, under Document No. 98-3008 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 330 R 232, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 924 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 330 R 05, DATED MARCH 13, 1992, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 92-861, DATED MARCH 16, 1992, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$26,930.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009,** at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$26,930.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By: _____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

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EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

McDonald's Saipan recognizes its Employees of the Year: Jonathan Ray Diagro, Middle Road Store Employee of the Year; and Francis Pacho, Garapan Store Employee of the Year. The two were honored during the company's Christmas party on Dec. 24 at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort and Spa Saipan. Picture shows, from left, store general manager Marcia E. Ayuyu, Diagro, Pacho, Garapan restaurant supervisor Crisanta Daliva, and McDonald's president and owner Joe C. Ayuyu.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PINNING CEREMONY

Students and faculty members from the Northern Marianas College's School of Education pose for a photo after their pinning ceremony, where students who have just completed their student teaching give advice and insight to students who are about to begin their student teaching practicum. There were nine student teachers in the past Fall 2008 semester and 20 in the Spring 2009 semester.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

COMFORT KITS

The NMI Red Cross recently donated 160 comfort kits the CHC Gift Shop Volunteers. The comfort kits will be given out to families in need at the hospital. Pictured from left to right are CHC Gift Shop Volunteers Gerald Guerrero, Rita V. Tenorio, Paula B. Castro, J.D. Tenorio of the Red Cross, Anne Benavente CHC Gift Shop Volunteer, and John Flores of DPH. For the past few years, the NMI Red Cross has donated these comfort kits to the CHC Gift Shop who in turn hand them out to those individuals who have either been admitted to the hospital or have family members admitted in the hospital.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MILLENNIUM BOY

Special happy birthday to millennium boy Matthew Nico Henry Muller Songsong, who turned 9 on Jan.1. With love from family especially Grandma and Grandpa Songsong.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MAFEA MEETING

The Marianas Association of Filipino Engineers and Architects (MAFEA Saipan) holds a meeting prior to the group's Christmas party that was held Dec. 21, 2008, at the Garapan Central Park Pavilion.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THREE

From Page 1

early in the day on Dec. 31, said Crisha was not due for another week.

"I wasn't expecting her," she said of the baby, whose name has several family ties.

Crisha is a combination of Marciano's two sisters' names, Crystal and Isha. Rose is for Ayuyu's grandmother while Sinako is in honor of Marciano's great grandmother. Marciano said she was told that as the first baby born in 2009, Crisha would receive Pampers diapers for one year.

Crisha isn't the only New Year's Day baby in the family. Ayuyu's youngest brother was the first baby born in 1984.

Marciano's sister Isha said Marciano could now enjoy the New Year.

"She's just happy because she finally has her baby," Isha said.

Marivet T. Antonino said she feels the same way.

Antonino welcomed Andres Antonio Antonino Arza at 12:14pm Jan. 1. Antonino was due Dec. 31, and her water broke that day, but Andres Antonio wasn't born until the 1st when Antonino had a Caesarean section.

"I felt so happy when I saw my baby," she said of Andres, who weighed 8 pounds 13. 3 ounces.

Antonino said she didn't think of her baby being a New Year's baby until after the fact.

"Because it's my first baby, I don't really differentiate," she said. "But, as a mother, to have a New Year's baby I feel so happy, starting of the month, starting of the year, you have this little angel born. It's so good."

The hospital refused to identify the third baby due to health privacy laws and the parents have yet to authorize the release of information relating to the child as of press time.

Veronica S. Servidad, a nurse in the OB Ward, said that although there was only one baby born on New Year's Day last year, three is the average. Every month, more than 100 babies are born at the Commonwealth Health Center, she said.

ANOTHER

From Page 1

DPS spokesperson Lei Ogumoro said yesterday that on Tuesday at 9:38pm, Tinian DPS received a report of an individual who fell into the ocean from a cliff near the Dump Coke area.

Ogumoro said a preliminary investigation showed that three tour guide agents picked up Joung and seven other Korean tourists from Tinian Dynasty at 5:30pm that day.

The tour guide agents brought Joung and seven companions to Dump Coke to go cliff line fishing. At 7pm, the group had dinner and some of them were drinking alcohol.

Before returning to Tinian Dynasty, witnesses noticed that Joung was nowhere to be found.

Several of the witnesses went looking for Joung and later found him floating face down in the ocean near the cliff line.

After Tinian police were notified, Tinian Boating Safety officers responded and picked up the victim.

Ogumoro said the case was forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for further investigation.

Last Dec. 23, a Japanese tourist drowned while swimming with his daughter at Micro Beach in Garapan, Saipan.

Last Nov. 22, a fishing boat crew member reportedly drowned when he fell into the ocean near the island of Guguan.

CUC

From Page 1

why the emergency is necessary. The recent additions include the fact that hundreds of water meters, recently installed to properly bill for water usage, have failed due to their "insufficiency for humid, saline climates."

"While the well-respected supplier, Severn Trent, has agreed to replace the failed meters, this replacement will take time," Fitial writes.

Also, the declaration cites the new rates set by the Public Utilities Commission on Dec. 20 as one of the findings for the emergency order. PUC adopted a levelized energy adjustment clause of 23 cents per kilowatt-hour. The rate will stay in place for three months, until the PUC reviews the rates and sets a new LEAC for six months.

"The order, in effect, freezes CUC's rates for three to six months, including CUC's fuel clause rates," the emergency declaration states.

Fitial directs CUC to do the same measures as past declarations. They include: documenting procurement activity and notifying specific officials; contracting with an independent power producer for two years or less; providing within 30 days permits or compliance plans; procuring the labor and equipment needed to fix the Chalan Kiya distribution system and removing used oil from tank 104 and other barrels.

In November, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency filed a civil suit against CUC to compel it to adhere to federal regulations governing water, sewer, power, and fuel. If certain stipulations are not met, CUC can be penalized up to $1,000 per day per violation for the first 30 days; $2,000 per day per violation following the 30 days; and $5,000 per day per violation for each day after.

Benavente: Selection for running mate ongoing

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Rep. Diego Benavente, who has declared plans to run for governor in the November election, said he is targeting to announce early this year his choice for a running mate.

Benavente told *Saipan Tribune* that he has brought in several family members as well as several key political allies and friends who helped him over the years in his political career.

"We've been meeting several weeks, couple of months now, making some decisions," the former lieutenant governor said.

The first decision, he said, has already been made—whether he should run for governor or not.

Benavente said he already submitted to the Republican Party his letter of intent to run for the Commonwealth's highest position.

"The other thing that we are currently doing with family members and friends is, I've asked them to help me make the decision, help me make the selection of the individual that we would like to serve as my lieutenant governor," he said.

That process of choosing a running mate, Benavente said, is continuing and they are looking at some time early this year to formally announce it.

"We haven't even began to put names because the plan is several individuals will be submitting names and then the group reviews the names, discusses the strength or weaknesses of the individuals. We have a process in which hopefully we can come up with a right decision," he said.

Benavente earlier stated that improving the CNMI's relations with the federal government is the key in addressing the economic crisis in the Commonwealth.

Last Dec. 11, Benavente formally announced his plan to run for governor under the Republican banner in the November 2009 elections. He is the first to declare his candidacy among the several Republicans believed to be aspiring the chief executive's seat. Others reportedly interested in the post are former governor Juan Babauta and former House speaker Heinz Hofschneider.

HANMI: Hotel occupancy up slightly in November

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The hotel occupancy rate in the Northern Marianas increased by about two percentage points to 61 percent in November 2008, compared to the same month the year before.

In statistics released yesterday, the Hotel Association of Northern Marianas Islands also reported that year-to-date numbers increased 3 percent from 2007 to 2008.

HANMI president Lynn Knight attributes the improvements to the increased flight service to the CNMI. There are more flights from Tokyo and Korea now, as well as the addition of the Osaka route.

There were fewer hotel rooms available for the month of November 2008—82,380 compared to 85,050 in November 2007 but the 13 hotels sold 50,303 rooms, 211 more than the same month in 2007. One hotel, the association notes, was closed due to renovations.

Average room rates have increased from $83.71 in November 2007 to $89.34 in November 2008.

HANMI saw high occupancy numbers this past week because of the arrival of a Russian charter flight, and Knight said she expects good numbers across the board for December because of charter flights. Russian tourism numbers, Knight added, have increased significantly as Russians try to visit the CNMI before June 1, when new immigration laws come into place. Preliminary regulations published by the Department of Homeland Security do not include Russians in the visa-waiver program, which, Knight said, is one of the many reasons 2009 is an uncertain year for the CNMI tourism industry.

But November 2008 was notable because it was the month with the highest number of locals employed in the industry, Knight said. Out of 1,937 employees, 739, or 38 percent, were local.

This year to date, according to HANMI, member hotels have paid more than $2.8 million in gross receipts tax and $5.6 million in hotel occupancy tax to the government.

Man'amko to shoot own movie

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

They maybe too old to start a career in filmmaking, yet if plans push through, the man'amko could become the islands' next celebrities.

The Office on Aging is on the planning stage for a movie project that would not only showcase the lives of the CNMI's elderly but they would also be part of the production team and the film's actors and actresses.

The man behind this project is Office on Aging program coordinator Walter Manglona.

"They may not be doing the lead roles but for sure they would be included in the film as extras or some of the main roles," said Manglona, who is an aspiring filmmaker.

Manglona said he has been working on this project for quite some time now.

"I'm almost done with the script. I want to make it clear that this would not be a documentary," said Manglona.

He explained that the script would be fictional, dramatic and fun and would focus the lives of the senior citizens.

"We are doing this to showcase the fun and enjoyment of being with a group," Manglona said.

The project would be a fundraiser for the man'amko's planned trip this June to Guam, where 15 to 20 of them will be on the tour.

The shooting for the film is set to start in March.

Before that, Manglona is readying a drama class for the man'amko. Some of them would be given the opportunity to join trainings and workshops.

Manglona said some of the man'amko are not strangers to drama shows because they have already performed in previous years.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Tel. (670) 234-6866, 234-9447, 234-7689, 234-7670 • Fax. (670) 234-9021
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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Amendment of the Commonwealth's Consolidated Plan for Program Year 2005-2009
(This advertisement is paid for with CDBG funds provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.)

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is announcing the amendment of the Commonwealth's Consolidated Plan for Program Year 2005-2009. The amendment provides the inclusion of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) which will be made available to the Commonwealth by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Intended use of the NSP grant is described as follows:

Priority	Activity Type	Use of funds
NSP Purchase	The purchase and rehabilitation of homes and residential properties owned by banks/lending institutions that have been abandoned or foreclosed upon in the various villages of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, in order to sell such homes to eligible Low, Moderate, and Middle-Income homebuyers. [HERA §2301(c)(3)(B)]	At least 90% of NSP funds will be allocated to NSP Purchase and NSP Financing Activities
NSP Program and Administration Costs	Program and Administrative Costs	Up to 10% of NSP funds

Total NSP Allocation: $364,162.00. All NSP funds shall be used to benefit individuals and families whose incomes do not exceed 120 percent of area median income. At least 25% of NSP funds will be used to purchase and rehabilitate homes that will be sold to eligible homebuyers whose incomes are at or below 50 percent of the area median income. The CNMI's income limits for NSP are published at http://www.huduser.org/publications/commdevl/nsp.html under Pacific Islands.

The NSP program also establishes the following affordability requirements:

NSP funds invested per Unit	Minimum length of the Affordability Period
Less than $15,000	5 years
$15,000- $40,000	10 years
More than $40,000	15 years

The Amended Plan is available for public review and inspection at NMHC's Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, and at the respective NMHC Field Offices in Tinian and Rota during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays. Written comments must be received by NMHC **no later than 4:30 p.m., January 10, 2009, at our designated NMHC branches.**

NMHC does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to or treatment or employment of individuals under its programs or activities. NMHC has been designated to coordinate compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Section 504, the ADA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 504 regulations implemented by the EEOC and the Department of Justice. NMHC will make necessary arrangements for persons with disabilities. If you should require any additional information or need special accommodations, please contact Zenie P. Mafnas, Planner/Grant Writer at 234-6866.

/s/ Joshua T. Sasamoto
Corporate Director

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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

BLAS T. MAGOFNA ("Trustor"), on or about January 12, 1995, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on January 20, 1995, under Document No. 95-143 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 002 B 12, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 737 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 5014/94, DATED FEBRUARY 7, 1994, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 94-396, DATED FEBRUARY 10, 1994, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009,** at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$49,330.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009,** at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$49,330.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By:_____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

*****NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency*****

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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

MARINA A. BAUTISTA and LORETO L. BAUTISTA (collectively "Trustor"), on or about November 15, 1999, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on November 15, 1999, under Document No. 99-2777 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 011 G 972, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 781 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 011 G 18, DATED DECEMBER 3, 1993, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 93-4286, DATED DECEMBER 9, 1993, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$50,730.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009,** at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

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Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By:_____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XIX, Issue No. 3

Published daily at 2/F CIC Centre,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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EDITORIAL

The New Year

The reflection and prognostication that many of us engage in in print, voice and video around New Year's often seem a bit contrived, as if we have to do it because of the calendar, even though nothing much is changing from one year to the next. This time it's different. Americans and many of the rest of the world's people, with whom Americans' lives and fortunes are intertwined, have the feeling that in 2009, we may really be in for it. It's a year when the two-faced Roman god for whom this month is named might well be portrayed looking back with shock and ahead with trepidation.

The central fact, of course, is the quake that has rolled through the economies of the United States and much of the world in recent months, the aftershocks that continue, and the dread feeling that the Big One is yet to come. We are discovering that the economic arrangements that have served us so well for years do not guarantee permanent prosperity, and, by the way, there are many people whom they have never served all that well, anyway.

Americans remain hopeful. A new presidential administration is on the way, full of ideas and vigor. World leaders have learned from past economic disasters the need for cooperation and coordination. But the politics of fear and narrow self-interest can undermine the best efforts to revive and maintain prosperity and to provide greater security for all when it comes to the essentials: housing, food, medical care.

Policy will matter, and in this regard it is good to know that the president-elect is not given to following the tired formulations of the left, the right and the various shills and operators who dominate so much of what passes for public discussion. He is pragmatic, open-minded and thoughtful. But, as he knows, he will also have to take on some powerful forces, those aligned with his party and those in opposition, and that will take courage. And in the end, of course, it will be not just policy that saves us but, as always, the energy, imagination and desire of the people—people who see opportunity where others do not and who have the freedom to pursue it.

Some well-known words from Abraham Lincoln, delivered to Congress in December 1862, have been cited often in the past few months. They are worth citing once more on this day: "The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country."

Lincoln added in that speech: "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history." That's as true now as it was in the much darker year of 1862. The imperative to act wisely and well is just as urgent.

Oh, and while we're at it, happy New Year.

(c) 2009, The Washington Post

Letter to the Editor

Yo! Tina4President!

Now, that sounds like yelling to the U.S. President, "Howdy, George!" while he and Laura shop at the Neiman-Marcus corner Northwest Highway and Central Expressway north Dallas. The sound of familiarity may sound disrespectful to some but this kind of informality in the Lone Star State would bother none. And Tina has brought refreshing and delightful informality to our staid political theatre, so what better way to greet her and her following but with a spirited push for the White House 2016!

Executive Tina is, of course, the subject of this musing, though thinking about the presidency of the United States in the afterglow of Obama's end run touchdown (we are still thinking football country here) is not too far off center. Hillary's breakthrough and the frenzy that followed the catapulting of heretofore unknown Palin to political center stage, certainly make every little Susie's prospect to occupying 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. no longer a question of whether-or-not, but simply a question of when.

Tina is young (will have to wait two terms before meeting the 35-year-old qualifying provision), a woman, a member of a minority group and a cerebral head way above many current holders of public office in the Commonwealth and around the nation. Just from the foregoing, she's already a quatro-fer for the oddsmakers and betting aficionados! But I am ahead of myself.

No less than the venerable doyen of the literate social commentators on island Ruth Tighe suggested in a recent posting that Tina, in her estimation, is not only eminently qualified to be the next Governor of the CNMI, but that she stands way ahead of anyone among declared and whispered aspirants in intelligence and integrity.

In Ms. Tighe's words: *"Looking at the potential slate of candidates—as well as non-candidates—I'd have to say that I don't see anyone even close to the model set by Obama except Tina Sablan. She has fought custom, tradition, habit, whatever you want to call it, from the very beginning of her campaign for a seat in the House, and she made it. She continues to fight the status quo and, moreover, has initiated some admirable new practices, particularly the sharing of legislative calendars, agendas, memos, documents, etc., with the media and the general public. She is frugal to the extreme with her budget. She is unafraid, and relentless, in pursuing what she believes is necessary and important."*

SVES has a special niche for her alumni Tina, who also graced the Farewell and Recognition ceremony for the 6th graders a couple of years back, remarkable in that she was in a car accident on her way to the affair, and endeavored to make it to the event in time to share her reflections when it would have been perfectly understandable and excusable had she attended to the accident and its aftermath.

In our school's last assembly where students performed dance and musical numbers from the cultures of residents in the Marianas since European contact, the assembly grounds stood bare in the sun, devoid of the former shade of towering but aged flame trees that had become a danger to the students' safety and had to be cut down. A couple of teachers were tasked to approach island politicians for the use of their tents, and when told that Tina was one of two politicians who do not use their office budgets to further the practice of "donating" the use of tables, chairs and tents for community functions, one of the more politically active teachers asked: "I wonder what she uses her office budget for?" Without hesitation, I replied: "Expenses in aid of legislation!"

Tina early on took the effort to attend a San Antonio ES PTA meeting to explain to parents why she did not have tables and chairs to loan, such practical as well as symbolic transformation of her official role and function has endeared her to many, and vilification from a few.

Legislator Tina has shown her mettle and it is sparklingly refreshing. Some of her colleagues would not shake off the transcendent hurling of thunderbolts from Mt. Olympus, projecting power from the status of their offices. Others meekly retreated to the immanent interest of their clawing constituency and left themselves at the mercy of their supporters. Tina worked diligently and transparently, communicated clearly and without apology. This radical shift to honesty and transparency in governance is commendable; adding gracious proletarian style with refined cognitive faculties is a plus. Perhaps, that's what makes Tina so attractive to be the Commonwealth's next executive officer.

Gentle Uncle Ben's health screams of retirement. My friend in Tinian adds: "I am sure Charles is tired playing little Governor, anyway." But opportunism or even relevance aside, we greet the New Year with a sense of lucidity about the limits of the electoral process, but with enthusiasm for the process of governance that involves broad participation of the consent of the governed. Yo, Tina4Governor!

Obama was both facetiously and lovingly referred to as The One. He in turn gave a new twist to the "messianic" role. He ended his Grant Park acceptance speech after the election with: "This is our moment. This is our time, to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth, that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt,

See YO! on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

A powerful thirst

By ED STEPHENS

Ed is a pilot, economist, and writer. He holds a degree in economics from UCLA and is a former U.S. naval officer. His column runs every Friday. Visit Ed at TropicalEd.com and SaipanBlog.com.

New Year celebrations inspire powerful thirsts, to be addressed with bubbly liquids. But this time around my New Year's thirst is taking a turn for the practical. I'm thinking about water.

Yes, water.

Water has always been a little problematic on Saipan. But I've been a lot of other places where water is dangerous, and my work has taken me to two tropical locales that were in the grips of cholera outbreaks. As for 2009, I may work in some very remote places this year, and phrases like "amoebic dysentery" are enough to make me wince.

I've never been entirely smug about Saipan's water situation, since every typhoon that guns for the Commonwealth does entail a probability (how large, I know not) of causing a potable water crisis. I thought I had a workable solution to that: I stored 20 gallons of drinking water in a set of plastic, 5-gallon jerry cans that I bought at the Guam Kmart.

The idea backfired. The containers leaked after a few months.

As for rainwater, I'd prefer to clean it up before drinking it. And as for boiling water to clean it, that's such a fuel-intensive endeavor that it's not practical in a lot of cases.

It looks to me that we're left with several methods for emergency, or field, or travel, water cleaning. I'll highlight two and mention one other; and I'll skip a few entirely for brevity.

First, we consider purification tablets. These are tiny pills that commonly contain iodine (which some people are allergic too); you drop them (the pills, not the allergic people) into a container of water to kill the germs (or so they say; you'll have to ask a scientist how many, and what types, of germs they kill). Common offerings are bottles of 50 pills which, at two pills per quart, will treat 25 quarts. The cost is around ten bucks per bottle, less if you shop around, more if you don't. That's a must-have in typhoon territory. I mean, why not?

If you really want to get fancy, you arrive at a second method, which can certainly be combined with the first one. This is the portable water filter, and the market is (I can't resist the pun) saturated with brands and models, which are commonly sold to hikers and backpackers. Although some filters inject iodine into the water to kill all the germs, most don't, and you're up against a situation where you wonder if the pores in the filter are small enough to trap the smallest of the germs, so you just have to research it.

I'll just mention that the ditty-bag I have for my filter has a stash of iodine pills in it, so I can combat germs using both methods.

Anyway, portable filters are typically hand-powered pumps that push water through the filter media. They are certainly unobtrusive enough to keep in your typhoon kit or your hiking kit, and are anywhere in size from, very approximately, can-of-soda size up to half-liter-bottle-of-soda size. As for costs, they're generally in the $50 to $100 range for ones with a lot of plastic parts (common brands are MSR, First Need, and Katadyn).

Then the price point leaps vertically for a metal model (with ceramic filter media) made in Switzerland; this is the Katadyn Pocket Filter, which won't fit in your pocket, but will sure lighten it. They've climbed in price, now listed anywhere from $190 to $280, but they're hard to find in stock now. Anyway, I think they're cool.

Lately, there's been a clever, and comparatively cheaper, way to filter afield, and these are bottles or canteens with integrated filters. They're typically around $30 to $50. I've never tried one.

If you've spent much time in the developing tropics, you might have heard of a technique that is sometimes talked about ("SODIS," which I take to mean solar disinfecting, but I don't really know). This entails using a clear, two-liter plastic beverage bottle to bake water in the sun's UV rays for six hours. Information is all over the Internet.

In fact, all this stuff is all over the Internet, so you can make your own decisions. I don't claim that my approach is the best or is perfect, but I think it's a lot better than nothing. Be it typhoons, long hikes, or adventuresome travel, a little study and preparation now can prevent some real misery later.

Letters to the Editor

Don't lose our language!

Hafa Adai! I read the *Saipan Tribune* everyday and I want to say great job! I don't know if the *Tribune* has ever had a letter to the editor written by a teenager but I would love to be the first!

At 2:30am my plane left Guam for our sister island of Saipan and at 3am, we landed, I didn't know what to expect. As a teenager growing up in Guam, I've always wondered what our sister islands up north were like. In September 2008, I had the opportunity to travel to Saipan for the first time to attend the 3rd Annual Chamorro Conference. In Guam, hardly any Chamorro children born in the past couple of decades know how to speak or understand Chamorro. I was fortunate enough that my mother and father realized the importance of learning my language, therefore I can speak it quite well.

During my stay on Saipan, I was at a grocery store in Garapan when I heard an elderly Chamorro woman speaking to her grandchild in Chamorro and I have to say, that made my day. *Put fabot*, don't lose your language and don't make the same mistakes Guam has made. My mother and father are doing their best here in Guam to help preserve the language and culture. My mother, Lynn Taitano Iriarte, owns and operates a Chamorro language daycare while my father has a Chamorro chant group. I think that opening a Chamorro language daycare on Saipan would do the community well in helping retain the language there.

On another note, I commend all residents of Saipan, Tinian and Rota who have stayed and are doing their best to make the CNMI a better place to live in. I read the *Saipan Tribune* and a couple of local blogs such as Marianas Pride (Ed Propst), Must Be the Humidity, and Tinian Times and watch KSPN online daily. Therefore, I am aware of all the problems the CNMI has. As we move into the new year, I am urging all lawmakers in the Commonwealth to put all petty problems aside and help your people! I fear the worst for the Commonwealth if the current trend of events continue, but I am hopeful that the new year will bring more prosperous times for the CNMI.

The Commonwealth is a beautiful, beautiful place despite its problems. I urge all residents of the NMI to work together to make the islands a better place for all! In the future, I hope to open up a business on Saipan that the island currently does not have so I can do my part to help my sisters and brothers. And finally, si yu'us ma'ase to the people of Saipan for being so kind and giving me a memorable trip I'll remember for my entire life.

Aguarin Iriarte
Yigo, Guam

A helper...not a slave

This is in reference to the letter of Alex Rangamar. You know, I admit that there are so many contract workers on Saipan that still wants to stay even though they were treated badly. It really hurts me when there are still some people like you who are so selfish to say "take it or leave it." Sir, you are talking to people (who have feelings like you) and not to animals. There are some contract workers who are so desperate to keep their jobs but they don't have a choice but to stay in Saipan because their life would be more difficult if they go home to their respective homeland. I do hope you understand them, how poor these people are. This is their only way to voice out that they are not slaves but helpers. These are two different things. It seems that some employers are treating these contract workers as their "own". Have pity on them. I think it is better to give them gratitude for giving a lot to Saipan. We owe them at least a thank you.

Kayc Lynn
Houston, Texas

The blind following the blind

I was drafting a letter to the editor in response to a recent letter from Lee Anderson when I read the response from Ruth Tighe. I don't always agree with Ruth, but on this one she hit it right on the head.

For some reason, from the time Gov. Fitial took his oath of office, Mr. Anderson has appointed himself as the great protector of our governor. The governor does not need a mouthpiece; he already has one in the name of a press secretary. I know Mr. Anderson and have never understood his blind following of this administration. Granted the governor inherited many of the problems that previous administrations left for him to clean up. However, I can think of nothing that this governor has done to make life better for the people of CNMI.

Mr. Anderson's recent letter, however, left me wondering what he is putting in his morning coffee. He can't really believe what he wrote. But then again, knowing the man I should have expected it. He has always gone on the attack of anyone who says anything against Governor Fitial. Anderson, (as he claims), a former military warrior, knows that you fight the little battles to win the overall war. Nobody who has ever had to go into battle would ever take on the whole war in one fell swoop. This makes me now wonder about his claim to have ever been a combatant. Freshman congresswoman Tina Sablan should be hailed as a combatant and not demeaned for her not taking on the entire war on the Hill at once. She has made us all more aware of the corruptions on Capital Hill and she is trying her best to fight the battles one by one to reach her intended goal of Open Government. She is up against tough odds fighting those who have been happy with doing nothing in office but collect big paydays and doing nothing to make life better in the CNMI. Her present desire to get to the facts about those in charge is prime and through this exposure she will win a huge battle for Open Government. Who knows, what she might able to uncover may just indeed expose some others in government who have been misusing government funds and their office for personal gain, including some of those that Mr. Anderson eluded to.

Good for you Representative Sablan. Keep up the good work. We need more legislators like you. Mr. Anderson, my suggestion to you is that you take your ridicule of those who are actively doing something to make the islands better somewhere else, like maybe back to your homeland of Hawaii. You are among those of the blind following the blind and refuse to take your head out of the beach sand to see the truth about this administration. Demeaning Tina is not helping win the war but is rather an attempt to divert the attention off of a misguided administration and onto anyone else.

Bob Emmett
Susupe, Saipan

YO!

From Page 6

and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can." Hillary added: "Yes, we will!"

Joseph W. Matthews, a 20th century theologian coined the phrase "No-Messiah Messiah" in reference to Jesus. It is as if the Nazarene walked into Jerusalem a couple of millennium ago and proclaimed in its solemn assembly: "You are waiting for the Son of David to come and free you from the Romans. Well, I bring you good tidings. No one is coming, and I who bring you that good news, am He who you've been waiting for. You want to be free! Pick up your bed and walk." Not exactly the kind of message the local covenant party and chamber of commerce was waiting for; it earned him a trip to Golgotha!

Amazingly, some did hear the message, picked up their lives, and walked into the annals of human history. In over a fortnight, Obama will assume the highest executive office of the land. How he plays his "messianic" role, or more precisely, how the electorate that sent him to the Oval Office will aid in his playing his role, will determine the nature of his administration.

As for the Governor's seat up Capital Hill, just when I was revving up to finally foray into the political arena and echo what was shouted a year ago at the Unity March in Saipan when a portion of the crowd called out with "Tina4Governor," Ruth reminds us that the age qualification for Governor is the same as that of the U.S. President. I guess we'll just have to go for the White House, then!

Jaime Vergara
via e-mail

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with scattered showers. Northeast winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲85° ▼75°	▲84° ▼75°	▲85° ▼75°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°

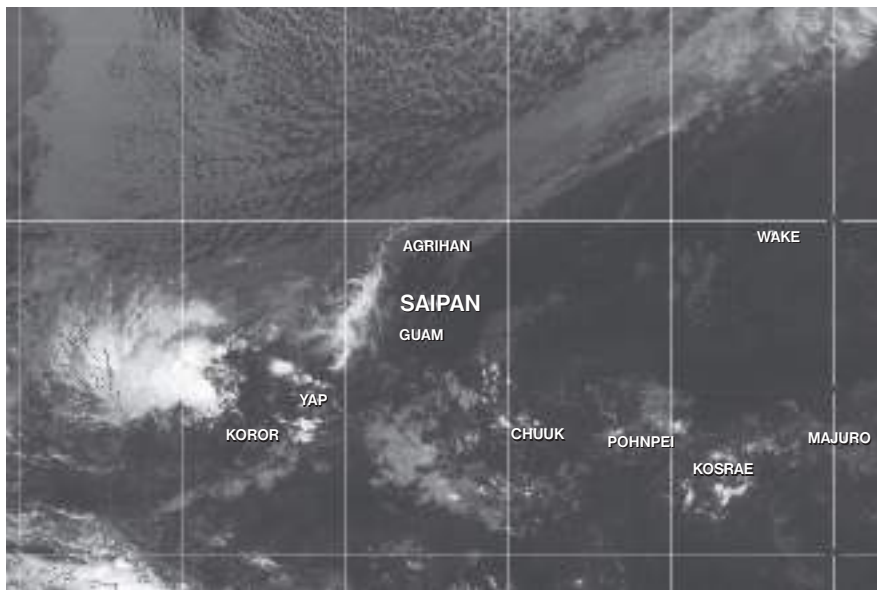
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲81	▼75
Palau	Thundershowers	▲87	▼78
Yap	Partly Sunny	▲86	▼77
Chuuk	Showers	▲89	▼79
Pohnpei	Showers	▲86	▼75
Kosrae	Partly Sunny	▲88	▼77
Majuro	Rain	▲84	▼76

Around The Globe

Auckland	Thunderstorms	▲65	▼57
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲36	▼16
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	▲63	▼57
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	▲77	▼70
London	Mostly Sunny	▲37	▼28
Los Angeles	Showers	▲63	▼46
Manila	Showers	▲83	▼73
Melbourne	Sunny	▲74	▼59
Miami	Cloudy	▲79	▼65
New York	Partly Sunny	▲35	▼26
Osaka	Cloudy	▲46	▼35
Paris	Sunny	▲33	▼28
Pusan	Sunny	▲45	▼26
Rome	Rain	▲48	▼26
Salem	Snow	▲40	▼31
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	▲53	▼39
Seoul	Cloudy	▲34	▼16
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲47	▼31
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲45	▼31

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, FRIDAY, JAN. 2, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front stretches southwestward from 25N158E to near Pagan at 17N146E then continues as a shear line to beyond 130E at 13N. Cloudiness, widespread rain and embedded scattered showers are found along and to the northwest of the front and shearline to beyond 25N. A weak circulation centered west of Koror at 7N128E is triggering scattered showers and a few thunderstorms between 9N and 13N from 130 to 133E. Convergence in the vicinity of a surface trough extending eastward from 7N144E to 7N150E then southeastward to end at EQ156E is generating scattered showers and a few thunderstorms near and west of Chuuk between 3N and 10N from 142E to 151E. Trade-wind convergence is causing scattered showers within 150 miles of a line extending southeastward from 8N158E to 3N153E then northeastward to 6N165E then eastward to end at 7N173E. This area includes Pohnpei, Kosrae and Majuro.

Tides

Saipan Harbor

5:32AM Today	Low Tide:	0.3 Feet
12:20PM Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet
7:02PM Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:44AM	5:59 PM
Sunday	6:44AM	6:00 PM
Monday	6:45AM	6:00 PM
Tuesday	6:45AM	6:01 PM
Wednesday	6:45AM	6:01 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	11:01AM	11:29 PM
Sunday	11:38AM	
Monday	12:18PM	12:21 AM
Tuesday	1:03PM	1:16 AM
Wednesday	1:53PM	2:16 AM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com or jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com.
- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

POLICY

- The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to accept or reject a contribution for publication; the right to edit all contributions, the date of publication, size of the picture, and page placement; and the right to publish contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats.
- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Sunday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $182. Off-island subscription rate is $376 per year. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2009

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:35am	Daily
NW 078	8:20am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Guam-Narita			
NW 73	4:10pm	7:00pm	Daily
NW 81	3:55pm	6:55pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
OZ 119	4:00am	6:40am	1,4,6
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Guam-Osaka			
NW 79	4:45pm	7:35pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:20am	11:05am	Daily
Guam-Nagoya			
NW 23	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 119	4:00am	11:25am	1,4,6 via Osaka
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:20am	6:50am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Palau			
CO 953	7:40pm	8:40pm	1,7
CO 893	5:50pm	6:50pm	3,5
Palau-Manila			
CO 893	7:35pm	9:10pm	3,5
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7
Nagoya-Manila			
NW 71	8:40pm	11:55pm	Daily
Incheon-Hongkong			
OZ 721	9:20am	12:00pm	Daily
OZ 723	7:45pm	10:35pm	Daily
OZ 7173	8:00pm	10:50pm	5,7
Narita-Manila			
NW 1	7:00pm	10:55pm	Daily

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:20am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Narita-Guam			
NW 74	9:45am	2:20pm	Daily
NW 82	10:30am	3:10pm	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
OZ 120	9:50pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7
NW 084	10:40am	3:05pm	Daily
Osaka-Guam			
NW 80	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:20am+1	Daily
Nagoya-Guam			
NW 24	10:00am	2:30pm	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7 via Osaka
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Palau-Guam			
CO 954	2:30am	5:25am	1,2
CO 892	2:35am	5:30am	4,6
Manila-Palau			
CO 892	10:10pm	1:50am+1	3,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Manila-Nagoya			
NW 72	6:30am	11:05am	Daily
Hongkong-Incheon			
OZ 724	12:30am	4:50am	Daily
OZ 7183	12:45am	5:05am	1,4,6
OZ 722	1:30pm	5:45pm	Daily
Manila-Narita			
NW 2	7:45am	12:40pm	Daily

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Schedule of Religious Services

CATHOLIC

Mt. Carmel Cathedral
Sunday Mass: 6am, 9am, 11am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm

Korean Center
Sunday: 10:30am
Wednesday: 10am
Thursday-Friday: 8pm
Saturday: 3pm and 7:30pm

Kristo Rai Parish
Sunday Mass: 6am, 8am and 9:30am
Monday- Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6am and 6pm
Saturday: 6am and 6pm

Nuestra Senora De Soledad Parish
Wednesday Mass: 6pm
First Friday Healing Mass: 6pm
Saturday Mass: 6pm
Sunday Masses: 7:30am & 9am

Saint Jude Parish
Sunday: 6am, 8am, 10am
Wednesday and Thursday: 6pm

San Antonio Parish
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Tuesday and Friday: 6pm

San Francisco de Borja-Rota
Sunday: 6am and 8am
Monday-Saturday: 6am
Wednesday: 6pm

San Isidro-Rota
Sunday: 5am and 10am
Monday-Wednesday: 7pm
Thursday-Saturday: 5am and 7pm

San Jose (Oleai) Parish
Sunday: 6am and 7:30am
Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday: 6pm

San Roque Parish
Sunday: 9am
Wednesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10:30am

San Vicente Parish
Sunday: 6am, 9am and 6pm
Monday-Saturday: 6pm

Santa Remedios
Sunday: 7:30am
Tuesday: 6pm
Saturday: 10am-Baptism

Santa Soledad
Sunday: 7:30am

PROTESTANT

Born Again Christian (Upper Room Int'l Ministries), Saipan
Wednesday Prayer and Healing Night: 8-10:30pm
Saturday Tagalog Service: 8-10:30pm
Sunday English Service: 9:30-11am
Sunday School for Children: 10-11am
Sunday Filipino Service: 7-9pm

Calvary Baptist Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 9am
Sunday Morning Worship: 10am
Sunday Evening Worship: 6pm
Wednesday Prayer Service: 7pm

Chinese Christian Church of Saipan
Worship Services: Sunday, 10am and 7:30pm
Bible Study: Tuesday-Friday, 9:25pm

Cornerstone Christian Church, Saipan
Worship/Study Opportunities
Adult Sunday School: 9am
Youth Sunday School: 9am
English Worship Service Sunday: 10am
Sunday Service: 5:30pm
Worship/Fellowship Sunday: 9:30pm
Evangelism/Follow-up: Sunday/Monday: 1:30/7:30pm
Worship Team: Monday/Saturday-9pm;
Cell Groups Tuesday: 7:30pm
Mid-week Service: 7:30pm
Prayer Meeting Wednesday: 7:30pm
Leader's Bible Study Friday: 7:30 pm
Cornerstone School of Ministry Saturday: 7:30pm

Episcopal/Anglican Church on Saipan
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Worship Service Sunday: Holy Communion 9:00am
Place: Vicarage, Chalan Laulau,
Call 235-0545 for directions

Grace Christian Assembly, Saipan
Worship Service: 9am
GBI Classes: 4-6pm
Prayer Meeting: Monday-Saturday: 6am
Sunday: 7am
Home Cell Bible Study: Wednesday-Friday: 7pm
Youth Service: Friday: 5:30pm

Iglesia Ni Cristo, Saipan
Wednesday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Thursday: 5:30am (English); 7:45 pm (English)
Saturday: 7:45pm (Tagalog)
Sunday: 6:45am (English)
Children Worship Service: Sunday, 9am (English)

Immanuel United Methodist Church Koblerville
Sunday Services
9:00 AM
Place of the church-next to Mt. Carmel Cathedral on Chalan Kanoa Dr. • Tel: 322-6158
Pastor JJ Matsumoto

Immanuel Methodist Church (Filipino Congregation)
Sunday: 7:00am-Choir Rehearsal
8:00am-Church Service (Tagalog)
9:15am-Sunday School
Wednesday: 6:30pm, home group
8:00pm-Prayer Meeting
Thursday: 7:30pm-Choir Practice (Church)
Saturday: 8:00pm-Choir Practice (Parsonage)

Jesus is Lord Church, Saipan
English Service: 9-11am, Sunday
Tagalog Service: 6-8pm, Sunday

Korean Presbyterian Church, Saipan
Sunday School: 8:20am
Sunday Adult: 10am
Sunday Adult: 11:30am
Sunday Evening: 7:30pm
Wednesday: 8pm

Life in the Son Christian Fellowship, Saipan
Sunday Worship Service: 10am–12noon
Tuesday: Leadership Institute 7pm-10pm
Wednesday: Corporate prayer 7pm-8pm
Last Friday of the month-prayer: 7pm-11pm
Friday: Youth on Fire: 7pm-9pm
Tel. No. 235-LIFE (5433)

Marianas Baptist Church, Saipan
English Worship Service: 9-10:30am
Evening Worship Service: 6-7pm
Children Sunday School: 9-10:30am
Tagalog Sunday School: 11am-12pm
English Sunday School: 11am-12pm
Korean Worship Service: 11am-12pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting:
English, 7pm-8pm
Korean: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Missions Connection Ministry
Every Sunday Celebrations:
10am (English), 6pm (Tagalog)
Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm
Youth Impact Friday: 7pm
Saturday Prayer Meeting: 7pm

Northern Marianas Christian Church
Sunday Worship Service 10am Fina Sisu Housing FS#1 (Child care will be provided)
Friday Services @ 7pm Fina Sisu FS#1 for more info pls. contact Ryan 484-2620

Saipan Bible Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30-10am
Divine Worship: 10am-11:30am
Evening Service: 7pm-8:30pm
Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8pm-9pm

Saipan Christian Church
Sunday: 7:30am-10am
Sunday: 6:30 pm -9pm
Monday: 8 pm -10pm (Prayer Meeting)
Thursday: 8pm-10pm (Cell Groups)

Saipan Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Class: 9am
Sunday Worship: 10am
Sunday Worship English: 6pm
Sunday Worship Tagalog: 7pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30pm

Saipan Community Church
(Sunday Services)
Palau Service: 7:30am-9am
English Service: 10am-11:30am
Chuukese Service: 1pm-2:30pm
Filipino Service: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Saipan
(Saturday Church Services)
Sabbath School Program: 9-10am
Lesson Study: 10-10:40am
Divine Service: 11-12pm
Visitation: 3-4pm
Adventist Youth Program: 4:30-5:30pm
Sundown Worship: 6-7pm

First Baptist Church
(Formerly Saipan Baptist Church)
Afetna St., San Antonio
Sunday
9am Sunday school
10am Regular worship
6pm worship
Wednesday
7pm worship
Everyone is warmly welcome to attend our worship services. Transportation is readily available to anyone who needs a ride to our church. For further information, please call Pastor David M. Mclure at 234-1939/235-7779.

Thy Word Ministries Saipan Faith Center
Phone 234-0209
New Christian Charismatic Church Service located in Chalan Paio, Beach Road in the Sablan building on the 2nd floor above Subway Sandwiches.
Senior Pastors: George & Gail Kamakahi
Asst. Pastors: Eric & Penny Sakaguchi
Service Times
Sunday 10:00am Worship Service
Sunday 7pm Discipleship Classes
Tuesday 10:00am Bible Studies
Tuesday 6:00pm Intercessory Prayer
Tuesday 7:00pm Music Practice
Wednesday 7:00pm Mid-Week Service
Saturday 10:00am Evangelism

Upper Room International Ministries
Sunday 5:30am-6:30am Morning prayer
7am-9am English service
7am-9am Sunday school
10am-12noon English service, Koblerville
Wednesday 7pm-9pm Prayer meeting
Saturday 7pm-9pm Tagalog service
Venue: Jason Presbyterian Church
Gualo Rai, Saipan

Victory Chapel Christian Fellowship Church
Sunday School: 9:30am
Sunday AM Worship:10:30am
Sunday PM Worship:7:00am
Wed Worship: 7:30pm
Prayer 45 min. Prior to Service Times
Morning Prayer: 6-8am M-S

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 3, 2001

Oil firms monitor world prices of gas
Although world prices of crude oil have already started sliding, the adjustments are not enough to warrant a rollback in local prices of petroleum products but major companies disclosed they are strictly monitoring the trend in the international market. Major oil retail industry players in the region—Mobil Oil Mariana Islands, Inc. and Shell North Pacific—are not likely to disclose immediate plans but stressed that they remain abreast on the situation in the world market. Shell North Pacific president Andrew Harford said the oil company is on consistent review of the trends in the regional market but added that the current international situation does not warrant any adjustment on local prices yet.

Police inches close to solving school burglary
Police may be able to resolve the William S. Reyes Elementary School burglary this week as investigators recovered some of the stolen equipment and obtained confessions from some of the suspects. According to Police Capt. Delbert Sablan, the suspects may be arrested this week as investigators have already identified the suspects. Most of the equipment which were stolen and sold to different people have been recovered by the police over the weekend which include television set, computers and air con units. The police asked the school authorities to submit an inventory of the equipment missing in the school.

January 3, 2002

Newly-signed laws give investors more reason to do business in NMI
Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio jumped the gun yesterday on the Three Wise Men by bearing gifts for the CNMI's investors in the form of two newly-signed laws, which effectively give them more reason to continue doing business in the Commonwealth. Just four days shy of The Epiphany, Tenorio simultaneously signed into law House Bill 12-380 and House Bill 12-391, which amends the Investment Incentives Act to benefit pre-Act investors and clarifies the CNMI's tax laws to avoid double taxation, respectively. As Tenorio pointed out, House Bill 12-380-now known as Public Law 12-80-expands the time frame within which a business can become eligible to apply for a Qualifying Certificate, making it retroactive to three years before the enactment of the Investment Incentives Act on December 3, 2000.

Transition panel told: Respect govt. workers' privacy rights
It seems the Transition Committee has embarrassed itself again, after it apparently tried to secure private information about some personnel in the course of their work, resulting in the Attorney General's Office issuing an opinion upholding the privacy rights of government workers. This came to light after the Transition Committee accused the Office of Personnel Management of having communication problems with the Developmental Disabilities Council and scolded it for disseminating the Attorney General's opinion on access to personnel records to other departments. Apparently, some transition panel subcommittees were asking the different departments for access to personnel records, which the departments felt were legally questionable and a violation of the privacy rights of individuals.

January 3, 2003

MPLA board approves reorganization
To be more focused and efficient in its operations, the Marianas Public Lands Authority Board of Directors yesterday approved a new organizational chart that resulted in the creation of two new divisions. From the previous five, the new chart showed six divisions directly under the deputy commissioner's office headed by Frank Eliptico. Eliptico's previous Real Estate division is now called Property Management, and is now headed by John Oliver Gonzales.

Youths train on media devt
Youth leaders gathered yesterday at the Aqua Resort Club to undergo a weeklong workshop on media development that would run up to January 7. During the kick-off training, youth leaders discussed proper presentation of media subjects, brochure and poster making, proper dissemination of information, and newspaper publication. According to Public School System HIV-Health Program Coordinator Jackie Quitugua, the workshop aims to utilize youth leaders as role models for the community.

Business

Street looks to '09 with relief after terrible '08

NEW YORK (AP)—The last trading day of 2008 on Wall Street provided a merciful end to an abysmal year—the worst since the Great Depression, wiping out $6.9 trillion in stock market wealth. Six years of stock gains disappeared as the economy crumbled and markets crashed around the globe, shaking the confidence of professional and individual investors alike.

But the year's chaos went far beyond the stock market. Credit markets that drive lending became paralyzed, plunging the country further into recession and touching off an unprecedented rush for the safety of Treasury bills, notes and bonds. Commodities markets, usually ignored by most investors, soared on speculative buying and then collapsed when it became clear that the world economy was in trouble and that record high prices, including oil's peak above $147 a barrel, were unjustified.

"It was a feeling of flailing," said Jerry Webman, chief economist at Oppenheimer Funds Inc. "People couldn't get a grasp because there were not obvious historical precedents."

By the year's end, many market analysts were predicting that 2009 would be better, but that recovery would be slow as investors, shaken by the devastation to their portfolios, U.S. companies and the overall economy, remain reluctant to buy.

"I think this may be much more of a show-me market than we're used to. The market is going to be looking for some stabilization, increases in earnings, a few more positives before it begins to recover," said Webman.

Wall Street's stats for 2008 provide evidence of how stunningly terrible the year was:

■ The average price of a share listed on the New York Stock Exchange plunged 45 percent to $41.14 by the end of the year from $75.01 a year earlier.

■ The Dow Jones industrial average fell 33.8 percent for the year and 38 percent from its record close of 14,165.53 in October 2007, making it the Dow's worst year since 1931, when the country was in the midst of the Great Depression.

■ The Standard & Poor's 500 index, the indicator most watched by market pros, slumped 38.5 percent in 2008 and 42.3 percent from its 2007 high of 1,565.15.

■ Investors lost $6.9 trillion as relentless selling reduced the value of stocks across the market. That amount, measured by the Dow Jones Wilshire 5000 Composite Index, represented 38 percent of the total value of U.S. stocks at the start of 2008.

Yet the last week of the year was almost serene.

General Motors gets first tranche of US loan

DETROIT (AP)—General Motors Corp. may be well on the way to keeping its New Years' resolution to restructure with the arrival Wednesday night of the first tranche of $9.4 billion in low-cost loans from the U.S. Treasury.

The installment came in time for the world's largest automaker to avert a financial disaster in which it may have been unable to sustain operations and pay suppliers.

"Treasury today finalized the loan transaction for GM and funded the first tranche of $4 billion," said Treasury spokeswoman Brookly McLaughlin in a written statement.

The Detroit automaker had been working feverishly with Treasury officials to close on the installment. The money will be available for GM to use almost immediately.

GM is obligated to a make a large payment to a major supplier in early January, but has declined to offer details on the amount of money it owes or to which supplier.

"We appreciate the Administration extending a financial bridge to GM at this critical time for the U.S. auto industry," said GM in a written statement shortly after the Treasury announcement. "We are committed to successfully executing the viability plan we submitted on December 2 and remain confident in the future of General Motors."

The loans come from the $700 billion bank rescue plan, approved by Congress in September. President Bush said earlier this month that the ailing automakers could tap part of those funds in the form of low-interest loans.

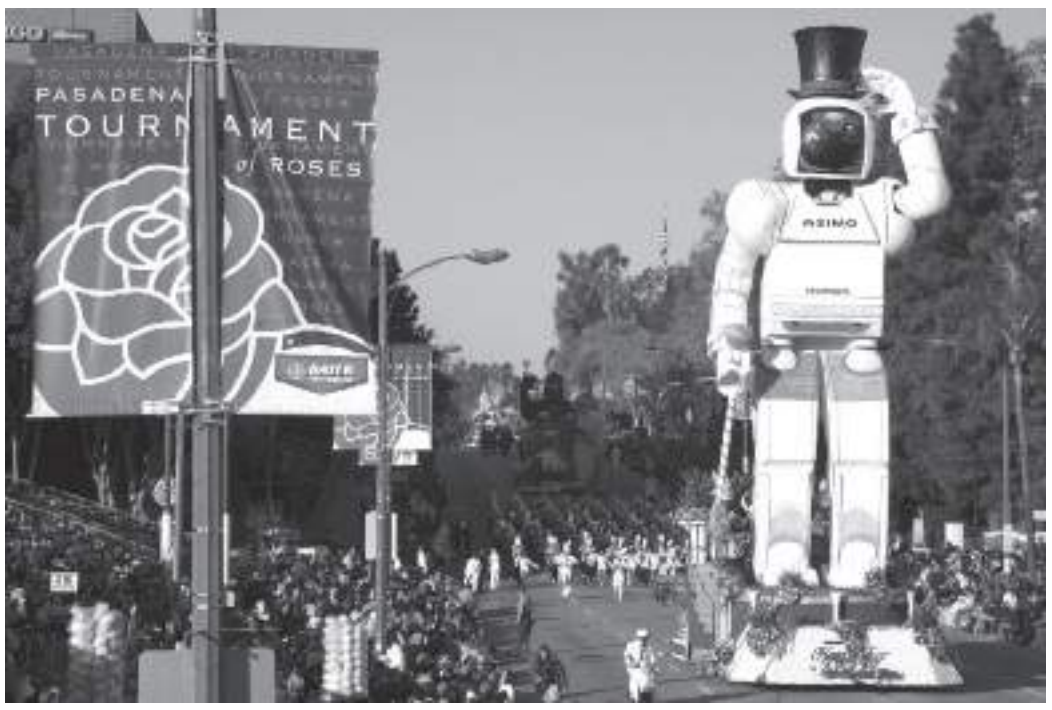
GM is burning through approximately $33 million a day, based on spending $1 billion per month during the third quarter. That daily amount is likely lower for the fourth quarter as GM has reduced spending on operations, sponsorships, utilities and even office supplies.

GM previously said it might not make it through the end of the year before running out of cash without government aid.

Auburn Hills, Mich.-based Chrysler LLC is expecting $4 billion in cash as well, but the Treasury has yet to announce the closing of the first round of loan money.

Nation

Sunshine, big crowds greet New Year's Rose Parade



AP

Winning the Theme award for Excellence in Presenting Parade Theme the American Honda float who's theme is "Hats Off in Celebration" moves along Colorado Blvd. during the 120th Rose Parade in Pasadena Calif., Thursday, Jan 1, 2009.

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Spectators who claimed their spots for the Rose Parade hours before it began were rewarded Thursday with spangled dancers paying tribute to Broadway, a lush garden wedding flanked by sari-clad models representing India's Bollywood film industry and a giant robot with a surprise under his hat.

A 49-foot-tall mechanical man named Asimo tipped his top hat on a float sponsored by Honda Motor Co. The crowd was wowed when fireworks and streamers shot out of his headgear—a nod to this year's theme, "Hats Off to Entertainment."

"That was something," said Peggy Tesh, 82, who came to the parade with her family from North Carolina.

At one point, the towering robot snapped an overhead cable holding a street sign, but no one was injured, said police spokeswoman Janet Pope Gibbons.

The venerable Saturday movie matinee was represented in the entertainment theme by a swamp creature on a float with a dragon and a gorilla.

Pasadena police estimated that more than a million people descended on the city for the parade and the annual Rose Bowl game that follows it, plus various other Tournament of Roses festivities.

Temperatures started off in the low 50s in the early morning but heated up about 20 degrees during the parade, prompting 44 people to request medical help, double from last year, said Pasadena fire spokeswoman Lisa Derderian. Some were unconscious, with others suffering from dehydration and chest pains.

A number of marching band members were treated. "They're wearing heavy uniforms, using heavy equipment. They may not be acclimated to the conditions here," Derderian said.

An hour into the parade, the massive crowd tilted heads upward when the Air Force's B-2 Spirit stealth bomber flew overhead in honor of U.S. military stationed around the world.

The housing crisis didn't deter the National Association of Realtors, which entered its first float in the Rose Parade. It was one of 46 entries—some from major companies with sagging stock prices such as Honda and Macy's—in the floral extravaganza that has marched on through the Great Depression and world wars for 120 years.

Powerful NY lawmaker says he'll support Kennedy

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Despite early reservations, New York state's most powerful legislative leader now says he'll support Caroline Kennedy for the U.S. Senate if the governor names her to the seat expected to be vacated by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton.

State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver told the New York Post he's rethinking his views on Kennedy because he feels Gov. David Paterson will soon pick her to replace Clinton, President-elect Barack Obama's choice as secretary of state.

If she is Paterson's choice, the Democratic lawmaker said he will "work strenuously for her election," the Post reported Thursday.

Two people close to Paterson told The Associated Press they believe the daughter of the late President John F. Kennedy will be Paterson's choice. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak on the matter.

But Paterson cautioned Thursday that his search was still ongoing.

"It ain't nothin' till I calls it," the governor said at a New Year's Day open house at the executive mansion, recalling a statement by legendary baseball umpire Bill Klem.

"Pass that along to any of these excited people who think they're going to influence me," Paterson said, according to The New York Times.

Kennedy's supporters include New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a Democrat-turned-Republican-turned-independent who is another important ally for Paterson.

RI Sen. Pell, creator of Pell Grants, dead at 90

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP)—Claiborne Pell, the quirky blue-blood who represented blue-collar Rhode Island in the U.S. Senate for 36 years and was the force behind a grant program that has helped tens of millions of Americans attend college, died Thursday after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 90.

Pell, a Democrat, died at his Newport home just after midnight, according to his former assistant, Jan Demers.

Pell was first elected to the Senate in 1960. The skinny son of a New York congressman, Pell spoke with an aristocratic tone but was an unabashed liberal who spent his political career championing causes to help the less fortunate.

He disclosed he had Parkinson's in 1995 and left office in January 1997 after his sixth term.

Members of Rhode Island's all-Democratic congressional delegation lauded Pell's legacy.

"Senator Pell was a remarkable statesman and legislator who worked tirelessly to promote peace and expand opportunity through education," Sen. Jack Reed said in a written statement.

AP

In this Sept. 5, 1995 file photo, Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., announces that he will not seek a seventh term during a news conference in Providence, R.I. Former six-term Rhode Island Sen. Claiborne Pell has died after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease Thursday Jan. 1, 2009.

"We will all miss him deeply, and long benefit from the works of his farseeing soul," Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse said. And Rep. Jim Langevin called Pell a "gentleman and champion for those who needed their voices heard."

When asked his greatest achievement, Pell always was quick to answer, "Pell Grants."

He sponsored legislation creating the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants, which passed in 1972 and provided direct aid to college students. The awards were renamed "Pell Grants" in 1980. By the time Pell retired, they had aided more than 54 million low- and middle-income Americans.

4 arrested in N. California gang rape of lesbian

RICHMOND, Calif. (AP)—Two men and two teens have been arrested on suspicion of gang-raping a woman last month in the San Francisco Bay area while allegedly taunting her for being a lesbian, police said Thursday.

Officers arrested Humberto Hernandez Salvador at his Richmond home Wednesday night, Richmond police Lt. Mark Gagan said. The 31-year-old is being held without bail on gang rape, kidnapping and carjacking charges.

Police on Wednesday also arrested a 15-year-old Richmond boy and a 16-year-old Hercules boy, who were being held at a juvenile detention center on similar charges. Their names were not released.

Josue Gonzalez, 21, turned himself in Thursday after police announced they were searching for him. He was wanted on a $1 million arrest warrant on charges of gang rape, kidnapping and carjacking.

Gagan said Gonzalez asked for an attorney when he turned himself in but said nothing about his alleged role in the attack.

Police would not detail each person's alleged involvement in the attack but said tips from local residents led to the arrests.

Detectives say the 28-year-old victim was attacked on Dec. 13 after she got out of her car, which bore a rainbow gay pride sticker. The alleged attackers made comments indicating they knew she was a lesbian, police said.

ACROSS THE NATION

DC house fire kills girl, her parents, 2 others

WASHINGTON (AP)—A fire broke out at a Washington home Thursday morning, killing a 5-year-old girl, her parents and two others, fire officials said. A critically injured child was among four others hurt at the house, where Christmas lights remained on the front porch in the afternoon as crews removed charred debris, including a pink scooter and a toy truck. An electrical failure between the basement and the first floor of the two-story home in the northeast part of the city is believed to have sparked the blaze, which broke out around 7 a.m., officials said. The dead were identified as Keith Nelson, 23; Tawanna Gant, 22; their 5-year-old daughter, Kaniya Gant; Joseph Wilson, 10; and Charles Smith, 72. Authorities were not sure of the relationship between the boy, the older man and the other victims. "I don't think it actually hit everybody yet," said Dionne West, a cousin of Tawanna Gant.

Lawyer: Dec. 25 movie gunman fired in self-defense

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—An Iraq veteran charged in a Christmas night shooting over noisy moviegoers fired in self-defense, his lawyer said. James Joseph Cialella, 29, of Philadelphia, is charged with firing a shot that broke the arm of Woffard Lomax Jr. inside a movie theater during a screening of the film "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." A judge on Wednesday ordered Cialella held for trial on aggravated assault, reckless endangerment and related charges. The judge tossed out an attempted murder charge over a prosecutor's objections. Lomax, 31, told the judge he was at the movie with his girlfriend and her three teenagers, enjoying the film and laughing, when a man in front of him—not Cialella—told him to quiet down. "We can't laugh?" Lomax recalled asking. A second man threw popcorn at the family, and a brawl ensued. Lomax said he was fighting with the first man when the second man pulled out a gun and fired, striking him in the left arm. A defense lawyer argued that Cialella was being choked and punched as he tried to break up the fight and fired in self-defense. "He's a marksman," lawyer Greg Pagano said. "If he wanted to shoot to kill, he would have." Cialella spent five months in Iraq with the Army before being honorably discharged in September, Pagano said.

Car going 54 mph over limit crashes in Ohio; 5 die

A car estimated to be going 54 mph over the speed limit struck railroad tracks on an Ohio road, went airborne and crashed early on New Year's Day, killing all five people inside, Dayton police said. Police Lt. Larry Faulkner said the 1996 Pontiac Grand Prix was damaged so extensively by slamming into a fire hydrant, a utility pole and a fence that it "essentially disintegrated." "It's bent in half, like a sandwich," he said. The five victims, which included an 11-month-old boy, were pronounced dead at the scene of the crash, reported just after midnight Thursday. The child was discovered last, buried at the bottom of the mangled wreckage. "Initially, it was ugly. When we found the child, it became sickening," police Lt. John Bardun told Dayton station WHIO-TV. The Montgomery County coroner's office identified the victims as Shawn Roush, 32, of Franklin; Trisha Roush, 33, and Dustin McDonald, 22, of Dayton; Nichole Hill, 29, and her 11-month-old son, Hayden Phann, both of Belbrook.

Asia

Dozens die in New Year's nightclub fire in Bangkok

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—It was billed as a New Year's Eve blowout and a last-night celebration of the wildly popular, classy nightclub before it moved to a new location. "Goodbye Santika," the promotion poster read.

Before the revelry was over, at least 61 people were dead and more than 200 injured when they tried to flee what swiftly became a charred, gutted ruin in a glitzy Bangkok entertainment area.

Several witnesses said a fireworks display during the New Year's countdown ignited the blaze. But one foreigner said he saw no pyrotechnics at the club and a video shot by a guest showed many inside the club waving sparklers shortly before the fire erupted.

AP

Fire and Rescue officials collect victims Thursday, Jan. 1, 2009, following a night club fire in Bangkok, Thailand.

Among the casualties were a Singaporean who died and at least 35 foreigners who were injured, including citizens of Australia, Belgium, Britain, France, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and the United States, according to officials and reporters.

A full accounting was not expected for about a week since nearly 30 of the corpses were charred beyond recognition.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Taliban ambush kills 20 Afghan police

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—Taliban militants ambushed a group of police while they were eating lunch in remote southern Afghanistan, killing 20 and fatally shooting the mother of one as she pleaded unsuccessfully for her son's life, an official said Thursday. A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said two militants were killed and four wounded in the ambush Wednesday in Helmand province. Ahmadi claimed 32 police were killed, but Afghan officials put the toll at 20, plus the mother. Afghan police have less training and weapons than Afghan soldiers, and they often bear the brunt of Taliban attacks. At least 870 police were killed in attacks in 2008, including the 20 in Helmand. Some 925 died in 2007. Violence in Afghanistan has spiked in the last two years, and Taliban militants now control wide swaths of countryside.

3 blasts in India's northeast leave 5 dead

GAUHATI, India (AP)—Three bombs exploded in India's restive northeast Thursday, killing at least five people and wounding 50, about an hour before the nation's top security official arrived in the area. Senior police official P. Saloi said authorities suspected the militant separatist group the United Liberation Front of Asom was behind the attacks in Gauhati, capital of Assam state. ULFA wants an independent state for the region's ethnic Assamese and is the largest of the northeast's many militant groups. No group claimed responsibility. The blasts went off in crowded areas of Gauhati just hours before Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram arrived in the city.

World

Israeli airstrike kills a top Hamas leader

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—An Israeli warplane dropped a 2,000-pound bomb on the home of one of Hamas' top five decision-makers Thursday, instantly killing him and 18 others, while the Israeli army said troops massed on the Gaza border were ready for any order to invade.

The airstrike on Nizar Rayan was the first that succeeded in killing a member of Hamas' highest echelon since Israel began its offensive Saturday. The 49-year-old professor of Islamic law was known for personally participating in clashes with Israeli forces and for sending one of his sons on a 2001 suicide mission that killed two Israelis.

Even as it pursued its bombing campaign, Israel kept the way open for intense efforts by leaders in the Middle East and Europe to arrange a cease-fire. Israel said it would consider a halt to fighting if international monitors were brought in to track compliance with any truce.

Iraq gov't gets control of Green Zone, US troops

BAGHDAD (AP)—The U.S. formally transferred control of the Green Zone to Iraqi authorities Thursday in a pair of ceremonies that also handed back Saddam Hussein's former palace. Iraq's prime minister said he will propose making Jan. 1 a holiday marking the restoration of sovereignty. Under the new security agreement between Washington and Baghdad to replace a U.N. mandate for foreign troops in Iraq, the Iraqi government also now has control of American troops' actions and of the country's airspace.

The moves came amid a dramatic fall in violence over the past year. However, insurgents still stage daily attacks and could try to expand the fight now that U.S. troops cannot take unilateral action.

WORLD BRIEFS

Russia, Ukraine say gas dispute won't hurt Europe

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia made good on its threat to cut off all natural gas supplies to Ukraine on Thursday—but the two uneasy neighbors took great pains to make sure their contract dispute would not leave Europe short of gas just as winter set in. Overshadowing their confrontation was the specter of 2006, when a similar dispute interrupted gas shipments to many European countries for three days. But both Russia and Ukraine now have strong interests in proving to Europe they can be reliable energy partners, and they assured other European nations they would not be affected. The cutoff was being closely watched in the European Union, which depends on Russia for about a quarter of its gas—with some 80 percent of that delivered through pipelines controlled by Ukraine. "I believe we are close to accepting a compromise solution," Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko said in a statement Thursday. He said he expected talks to resume in the next day or two and to be concluded by Orthodox Christmas on Jan. 7.

Cuba celebrates revolution's 50th anniversary

SANTIAGO, Cuba (AP)—Fifty years after triumphant armed rebels descended from the eastern mountains, communist Cuba celebrated the revolution's anniversary Thursday with toned-down festivities following a trio of devastating hurricanes and under the enduring public absence of an ailing Fidel Castro. The austere celebrations, including dances and concerts across the island, belied the start of a year infused with possibilities for increased cash and visitors, and other changes that might ease Cubans' daily hardships. Many here hope for improved relations with the United States when President-elect Barack Obama takes office Jan. 20 following declarations he would talk directly with Raul Castro and lift severe restrictions on family travel and remittances to the island. "I hope he gets rid of the blockade," 42-year-old Ana Luisa Mas said as she bought a pork leg for her family's New Year's Eve celebration, referring to decades-old U.S. trade sanctions.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

BRADLEY JOHN TOVES ATALIG aka LARRY JOHN TOVES ATALIG and NANETTE E. ATALIG (collectively "Trustor"), on or about September 20, 2001, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on October 2, 2001, under Document No. 01-2166 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 347 R 96, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 827 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 347 R 07, DATED DECEMBER 9, 1993, COMMONWEALTH RECORDER'S FILE NO. 93-4282, DATED DECEMBER 9, 1993, THE DESCRIPTION THEREIN BEING INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$26,230.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009**, at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$26,230.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By: _____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

*****NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency*****

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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

CELINA M. SETEFANO and VILIAMI S. SETEFANO (collectively "Trustor"), on or about August 2, 1983, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on August 3, 1983, under Document No. 17659 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT NO. 002 F 67, CONTAINING AN AREA OF 1,230 SQUARE METERS, MORE OR LESS, AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED ON DRAWING/CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 002 F 00, THE ORIGINAL OF WHICH WAS REGISTERED WITH THE LAND REGISTRY AS DOCUMENT NUMBER 691, ON THE 1ST DAY OF MARCH, 1971.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$43,730.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009**, at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$43,730.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By: _____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

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NOTICE OF SALE
UNDER POWER OF SALE
IN DEED OF TRUST

JUAN F. BARCINAS and BARBARA DLC. EVANGELISTA (collectively "Trustor"), on or about June 14, 1983, gave and delivered to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation ("Trustee"), acting on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Office ("USDA"), formerly known as Farmers Home Administration, United States of America ("FmHA"), a Deed of Trust upon certain real property hereinafter described, which Deed of Trust was recorded on June 16, 1983, under Document No. 17490 to secure payment of a Promissory Note of the Trustor to the Trustee, acting on behalf of the USDA, Rural Development Office.

The Deed of Trust and this Notice of Sale affect the property hereafter described:

LOT 001 T 52, AS SHOWN ON THE DIVISION OF LANDS AND SURVEY'S OFFICIAL CADASTRAL PLAT NUMBER 001 T 00, DATED AUGUST 14, 1969, AND CONTAINING AN AREA OF 1,486 SQUARE METERS.

The Trustor has defaulted on payment of the Note secured by the Deed of Trust, and by reason of said default, Trustee issued its Notice of Default and served to Trustor on September 12, 2008. More than thirty (30) days have passed since the default notice was served on Trustor and said default has not been cured.

Pursuant to 2 CMC § 4622(b)(2), NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Trustee will, on **January 15, 2009**, at 10:00 a.m., at the office of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, Garapan, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, under power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust, sell the above described parcel of real property at public auction to the highest qualified bidder, to satisfy the obligations secured by said Deed of Trust. The minimum bid offer shall be not less than **$82,930.00**. Sealed bids will be opened at the auction and those present will be given the opportunity to submit an additional bid, thereby, outbidding the highest sealed bid amount received by NMHC and opened on the date of the auction.

Sealed bids must be addressed to Ms. Merced M. Tomokane, Acting Chairperson of the Board, Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 and must also be received no later than **January 14, 2009,** at **4:00 p.m. All bids received from outside the Commonwealth must be received no later than January 14, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Untimely sealed bids will be rejected.**

The sale shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The purchase price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Trustee reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to cancel or extend the date, time and place for sale of such property. Any prospective buyer must be a person authorized by the Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to hold title to real property in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The further right is reserved, in the absence of satisfactory bids for the outright sale of the said parcel of real property to a qualified buyer, to offer such property at the same time and place, or at a later time, for long-term lease to any person on the usual terms and conditions for long term leases of real property offered by the Trustee to the highest bidder for such lease. The minimum bid amount of **$82,930.00** shall also apply with lump sum payment for the term of the lease.

The lease shall be without warranty as to the title or interest to be conveyed or as to the property under the Deed of Trust, other than that the Trustee is the lawful holder of such Deed of Trust. The lease price shall be payable by cash, certified check or cashier's check to NMHC and shall be paid within 72 hours from time of sale.

Dated this 10th day of December 2008.

By: _____/s/_____
JOSHUA T. SASAMOTO
Corporate Director

Inquiries may be directed to Mr. Joshua T. Sasamoto, Corporate Director, at 234-6866/9447 for more information.

*****NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency*****

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

Saturday, January 3, 2009

'Saudi needs 50,000 nurses in six months'

By VERONICA UY
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA, Philippines—The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs from 50,000 to 60,000 nurses in the next six months, and officials of the King Fahd Medical Center are in the country interviewing prospective applicants, a recruiter said Friday.

In a telephone interview with INQUIRER.net, Lito Soriano of the LBS E-recruitment Solutions said the requirement of the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, for medical staff was urgent, but the Philippines would only be able to fill up one in five job vacancies in the kingdom.

"Even with the economic crisis, the demand for nurses and other medical staff in the Middle East is very high and very urgent," he said.

"Unlike in the United States, the projected need for nurses in the Middle East is immediate," he added.

To illustrate the immediacy of the demand, Soriano said King Fahd Medical Center has linked up with more than two Philippine recruitment agencies to fill up the vacancies.

"This is a reflection of the lack of nurses there," he said.

"The top priorities in Saudi are security and health, and its ministries of defense, aviation, and health, which operated government hospitals, are doing the hiring not just for nurses, but for technical medical workers like X-ray technicians, respiratory technicians, and the like," he said.

Soriano said applicants might check out his company's website (http://www.e-recruitment.com.ph) or send in their applications to aplymsd@e-recruitment.com.ph.

WELCOME 2009! AP

Filipino revelers wearing 2009-shaped eyeglasses pose during a New Year's Eve countdown in suburban Manila, Philippines on Wednesday Dec 31, 2009.

11M Filipinos jobless in '09—economist

MANILA, Philippines—As the global economic crunch is expected to fully hit the country in 2009, at least 11 million Filipinos will lose their jobs, an economist said Friday.

In his forecast, former budget secretary Benjamin Diokno said millions of Filipinos would either go unemployed or be underemployed as the export sector would continue to slow down.

Labor Secretary Marianito Roque had admitted that there would be job losses although not on a massive scale.

"Unemployment will worsen, like those in the manufacturing, telecommunications, and banking," Diokno told INQUIRER.net in a phone interview.

Diokno also noted that aside from the worsening labor situation, unemployment would increase because of the additional 1.5 million Filipinos who would be graduating from college this year and joining the labor force.

Iran police arrest, maul Filipino for wearing a tank top in public

By JOJO DASS
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

KISH ISLAND, Iran—A 23-year-old Filipino was mauled by immigration police after he tried to break free from his captors who took him to a dark secluded area near their detachment after arresting him for wearing a tank top in public.

Christopher Pilapil, a graphic artist, said he fought to break loose because he feared he would be raped. There had been several unconfirmed reports here about expatriates being raped; the reports however, could not immediately be verified.

Pilapil said he got suspicious when the officers ordered him into their patrol car and sped him in a different direction instead of taking him to an immigration office just behind the hotel where he was staying at–Farabi—and in which vicinity he was arrested.

Pilapil said he tried to escape upon alighting from the patrol car near the vicinity of the immigration police detachment, which was behind another hotel—Espadana—some 10 minutes away from Farabi, and where other expats, including Filipinos, were billeted.

"I ran because I was afraid that they would rape me. I have heard lots of stories about locals, even law enforcement officers, arresting visitors for minor offenses, and raping them," he said.

He said he should have been given a warning as was the standard procedure and ordered home to change clothes.

He said the two officers inside the car, assisted by about a dozen more from the detachment, caught him back and subdued him as he struggled.

"One held my right leg; the other, my left one. Another held my right arm; and still another one grabbed my left arm. There was also another officer who held my head tight," Pilapil said. He said he managed to break free by kicking those holding his legs, and shouting at the top of his lung for help to catch the attention of fellow Filipinos inside Espadana Hotel, who were, by then, already checking out the commotion from their bedroom windows.

Pilapil said one of the officers punched him in the face; another kicked him on the sides.

"They stopped when they noticed that people were watching," Pilapil said.

He was then brought to the immigration office that was behind Farabi hotel and ordered to write and sign an apology letter, which he did.

Pilapil managed to make a phone call to one of his friends staying at Farabi, who immediately came to assist him.

Pilapil was arrested around 9:30pm, Dec. 30; he was released 1:30am, Dec. 31.

Iran observes strict laws on public conduct: Women are required to wear head scarves called shaila, and have their behinds covered with a wrap-around cloth; men are not allowed to wear shorts and tank tops; unmarried couples are discouraged from showing public displays of affection. Loud laughter is also not allowed.

First offenders are given warnings; those found repeating the same offense are locked up and deported.

Being on Kish Island where they wait for their re-entry visas to the United Arab Emirates, most expats—visa runners as they are called—fear deportation because that would mean being transported to their home country at their own expense; it also reduces their chances of going abroad for work again.

Pilapil, a visa runner, had been staying on Kish Island for over a month. His re-entry visa was finally issued on Dec. 31. He hurriedly left for Dubai because of fear for his life.

Repeated efforts to contact immigration officials for comments failed.

? LABOR FRONT

Federal moratorium

By FERDIE PONCE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Q: What is federal moratorium?

A: Public Law 110-229 or the federalization law requires that: "During the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on the transition period program effective date…the CNMI government shall not permit an increase in the number of alien workers who are present in the Commonwealth as of the date of the enactment of this Act."

According to the CNMI Department of Labor's Employment Rules and Regulations, the numerical cap of the number of alien workers who are present in the CNMI is 22,417.

■ ■ ■

Q: Who are those not considered alien workers?

A: The Regulations state that persons who entered or enter the CNMI as tourists, students, immediate relatives of aliens (who are not permitted to work), for investment purposes, or under treaty provisions are not included in the term "alien workers." Classification of any alien present in the Commonwealth is determined by the last approved permit application.

■ ■ ■

Q: Who are those alien workers considered present in the CNMI?

A: According to the Regulations, the term "present in the Commonwealth" includes "alien workers" who had an authorization for entry on the effective date, "alien workers" who were temporarily absent from the CNMI on the effective date due to medical referral, home leave, family leave, vacation, work assignment, or other temporary absence, and alien workers without current status on the effective date.

The Regulations state that Labor should publish each month on its website, on the day after the last business day of the month, the names of the "alien workers" who have departed the CNMI within that month and will publish at the same time the names of the "alien workers" who have entered the Commonwealth within that month. Labor is not allowed to let "alien workers" enter in the CNMI in a number that exceeds the number who have departed.

Disclaimer: Readers should conduct their own research and due diligence and obtain professional legal advice. Saipan Tribune *will not be liable for any loss or damage caused by a reader's reliance on information obtained from this section. Submit questions on labor issues to* Saipan Tribune *via e-mail at editor@saipantribune.com, or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the* Saipan Tribune*'s office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.*

Grenade blast wounds more than 20 revelers

Another bomb found in southern Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A grenade blast wounded more than 20 New Year's Eve revelers in a park and a powerful bomb was found near a passenger bus terminal in the latest incidents to raise security concerns in the southern Philippines, officials said Thursday.

Army officials have blamed a large Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, for recent bombings and grenade attacks in the country's restive south but police investigators have yet to come up with evidence that could identify the perpetrators.

A man lobbed a grenade into a crowd of New Year's Eve revelers at a plaza in the port city of General Santos late Wednesday, wounding at least 22 people, including some policemen guarding the celebration, officials said.

A grenade attack also wounded a policeman and two residents in a General Santos police station late Tuesday, police said. The attackers were not caught.

In Zamboanga city on Thursday, police safely defused a bomb—made from an 81 mm mortar round wired to an alarm clock—which was found near a bus terminal, police said.

A similar bomb, hidden in a sack of charcoal, exploded in a motorcycle taxi at a checkpoint in Sultan Kudarat province's Esperanza town late Tuesday, killing the driver and seriously wounding a policeman inspecting the vehicle, provincial police chief Superintendent Benhur Monggao said.

Another bomb was found in a passenger bus in a transport terminal in Sultan Kudarat's Isulan township on Wednesday. The bomb was safely defused.

The attacks have heightened a security alert that has been raised in the south due to intelligence reports, cited by army officials, of a plan by Muslim guerrillas to attack public areas to divert the military's focus from a monthslong offensive and retaliate for battle losses.

"They have a plan to attack soft targets but they will always deny it," said army Col. Marlou Salazar, who has been helping oversee offensives against the rebels.

Rebel spokesman Eid Kabalu denied Salazar's claims.

Malaysian-brokered talks between the government and the 11,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front collapsed in August when the Supreme Court stopped the signing of a preliminary accord on an expanded Muslim autonomous region, provoking a bloody rampage by three rebel commanders that killed dozens in predominantly Christian communities.

The rebel attacks prompted the military to launch a major offensive.

MIGRANTE INTERNATIONAL WARNS:

'2009 will be a bleak period for OFWs'

By DELFIN MALLARI JR.
SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

LUCENA CITY—As the government seeks to deploy two million laborers abroad next year, Filipino workers should brace themselves for more retrenchments, lower wages, and worse working conditions overseas, a migrant group has warned.

At the same time, Migrante International said it would hold the Arroyo administration "fully accountable for being hell-bent in exporting the most number of Filipinos abroad amidst the worsening global crisis."

Martinez recalled that during her 2007 state-of-the-nation-address, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pledged to deploy two million OFWs before her term ends in 2010.

In a statement to the Philippine Daily Inquirer Tuesday afternoon, Garry Martinez, chairman of Migrante International, said, "Time and again, we say that labor exportation is neither a tool for development nor an answer to the present crisis. We agree with CBCP [Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines] president Angel Lagdameo when he lamented the breakup of Filipino families because of parents working overseas."

Lagdameo lamented that poverty forced parents to work overseas just to make ends meet, breaking up the family in the process.

There are more than 11 million overseas legal and illegal Filipinos workers abroad, equivalent to about 11 percent of the total population of the country. Each year, more than a million Filipinos leave to work in different countries, most of them as domestic helpers and blue collar jobs.

Recent data from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration disclosed that a total of 1,221,829 OFWs were deployed worldwide from January 1 to November 30.

The POEA said that there were close to half a million job orders that have not been filled; of the number more than 100,000 were new additions from October to December this year.

However, an undetermined number of overseas Filipino workers have lost their jobs due to the global crisis, which, according to the International Labor Organization, could render 20 million people jobless by the end of 2009.

Martinez said that contrary to the claims of Arroyo, the Middle East region remained to be the worst destination for OFWs in terms of labor rights protection, especially now that it was also being hit hard by the global crisis.

He cited that in Dubai alone, labor complaints in the Ministry of Labor have tripled since November, most of which were cases of illegal termination and non-payment of salaries.

The group said that the situation was similar even in Saudi Arabia, the top destination country of OFWs in the region.

"It is gibberish when the Arroyo administration said that Middle East countries remain[ed] a haven for overseas employment just to cover up its inutility in addressing the crisis. Quite the opposite, the Ittefaq Steel Products Factory, the second largest steel manufacturer in Saudi Arabia, had announced that it would send 80 percent of its 2,145 workers on leave without salary for three months beginning Jan. 1, 2009," Martinez disclosed.

Martinez added that in the United Arab Emirates, not only the real estate and construction industry were being affected by the present economic downturn. Big multinational companies like General Electric, IBM, and Jeffries International are likewise retrenching their workforce or are totally pulling out operations from the gulf country, he said.

Village chief shot dead in Ilocos Sur

By ABIGAIL KWOK
INQUIRER.NET

MANILA, Philippines—A village chief was shot dead by suspected rivals outside his home in the province of Ilocos Sur Thursday, a police official said on Friday.

Romeo Tisbe, village chief of Barangay (village) Salumague was killed by still unidentified men outside his home at 12:45 a.m. at the height of the New Year's celebrations, said Senior Superintendent Virgilio Fabros, Ilocos Sur provincial police chief.

Fabros said Tisbe went outside his home to relieve himself when he was suddenly approached by the suspects and was shot at close range.

Tisbe was rushed to the Suero General Hospital but was declared dead on arrival, Fabros said.

Recovered from the crime scene were 10 empty shells of a 9-millimeter pistol.

Fabros said he was now pushing for a peace dialogue between warring political groups in the area. He added that police were looking at politics as the motive for the killing of Tisbe.

Fabros said one obstacle police encountered in their investigation was the lack of complainants that would help police solve the case.

AP

Filipino revelers watch a fireworks display in suburban Manila, Philippines during celebrations of New Years Day on Thursday Jan. 1, 2009.

Injuries from firecrackers at all-time low

By DONA PAZZIBUGAN
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—Filipinos bade 2008 adieu and welcomed 2009 with revelry and mayhem that left six people dead, but the number of revelers injured by fireworks fell to an all-time low, officials said Thursday.

They attributed the drop in the number of injuries from fireworks to high heavens—which brought rains and showers to Metro Manila and nearby provinces on New Year's Eve—as well as to the scare campaign against firecrackers and the economic crunch.

As of 8 a.m. Thursday, the Department of Health (DOH) said 346 cases of fireworks-related injuries had been treated in its 50 monitoring hospitals around the country since Dec. 21.

This is the lowest number of injuries recorded over the same period since the DOH began monitoring the extent of injuries owing to firecrackers six years ago.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III credited the department's scare campaign, which showed him brandishing a surgical saw on television to warn would-be firecracker victims of possible amputation, for the big drop.

But Duque conceded that the rainshowers over Metro Manila also thwarted those who might have intended to welcome 2009 with firecracker blasts.

"This is an all-time low. We are well below the lowest registered number of injuries in 2002 (510 cases)," the DOH's National Epidemiology Center director, Dr. Eric Tayag, said.

"Nature also cooperated with us," Duque said at a news conference.

"This is the first time I can remember in my 51 years of existence that New Year's Eve has been so wet, so people had second thoughts whether they wanted to buy and light up their firecrackers," he said.

Weather bureau chief Nathaniel Cruz also said the rains helped dampen the enthusiasm of revelers.

Still, firecracker explosions thundered across the metropolis and lit the sky toward midnight on Wednesday, but these were brief compared to long, frenzied celebrations in some of the previous years.

Three people were killed in Metro Manila and three in Iloilo province during the merrymaking.

One of the fatalities was Renato Petelona, 19, of North Bay Boulevard North in Navotas, who was standing around watching the revelry when a thrown firecracker exploded in his face, the Northern Police District said.

He was dead on arrival at the hospital, the NPD said.

Another victim, Alberto Perez, 40, of San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City, was killed when a stray bullet struck him also in the face while he was watching fireworks from a terrace at around 11:45 p.m., police said.

A third fatality was pedicab driver Pablo Gallo, of Dagonoy Street in Sta. Ana, Manila, who was hit by pellets fired from a sumpak (an improvised shotgun) by one of the warring groups in his neighborhood, the Manila police said.

Two people were shot dead following a quarrel during a drinking session in Cabatuan town, Iloilo, marring the New Year's Eve revelry there, according to the police.

Senior Supt. Ricardo de la Paz, Iloilo provincial police director, said the alleged gunman, Alfio Grana, got into an argument with his drinking companions, went home, returned with a gun, and shot them, killing two and wounding three others.

Police identified the two fatalities as Benedicto Pin and Ronald Amor.

The celebration in San Enrique, Iloilo, also turned tragic when Dennis Deborja was stabbed dead during a drunken brawl, police said.

Three deaths related to fireworks were reported during last year's celebrations: Two died from tetanus due to firecracker injuries and another from swallowing "watusi" (dancing pyrotechnics).

ING sees little remittance growth in 2009

By DORIS C. DUMLAO
INQUIRER.NET

Foreign exchange sent home by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are likely to slow down significantly to a 3.0-4.0 percent growth this year because of the weakening global economy, according to projections of the Dutch financial giant ING.

Remittances coursed through the banking system have exceeded $1 billion every month since May 2006, and the central bank expects a 13-percent growth this year.

ING economist Jose Mario Cuyegkeng, in a presentation to the Fund Managers Association of the Philippines, said, "Regression analysis reveals that for every one-percentage-point cut in US growth, Philippine OFW remittance growth is cut by 0.9 percentage point."

In 2008, the impact of the global downturn was offset by high overseas deployment of Filipino workers. Cuyegkeng said the full impact might be felt by the second half of 2009.

Slower growth in OFW remittances would slacken the growth of the economy to 3.8-4.1 percent, which may prompt the central bank to further ease monetary policy, he said.

ING had earlier forecast the 2009 growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) at 5.1-6.0 percent. The government's growth target is 3.7-4.7 percent.

Including money sent home by OFWs through non-banking channels, remittance inflows will likely amount to $16.9 billion, or about 10 percent of the GDP, central bank officials said at a recent news briefing.

The central bank, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, expects OFW remittances to remain strong this year although not as strong as in previous years, given the uncertainty in the financial environment.

AP

RIZAL DAY
In this photo released by the Presidential Close-In Photographers Office, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, right, salutes during the 112th Rizal Day Celebration at San Fernando, La Union province, northern Philippines on Tuesday Dec. 30, 2008.

Govt eyes OFW bonds anew

By MICHELLE V. REMO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The government is again considering sale of Treasury bonds specifically for overseas Filipino workers, some of whom face job cuts in their host countries as a result of the global financial crisis.

"We are looking at how we can help them so they will have investment opportunities," National Treasurer Roberto Tan said.

The government early last year engaged state-owned Land Bank of the Philippines, assisted by HSBC, to sell OFW bonds on its behalf.

The bonds were sold only to OFWs in Hong Kong although the government had planned to sell them also in other countries, such as in the Middle East.

This is why the government is considering another OFW bond float this year, Tan said.

The bonds sold last year were denominated in pesos. Tan said issuing bonds denominated in foreign currencies would require the government to comply with various requirements by foreign regulators.

The central bank, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, has encouraged the government to sell bonds intended specifically for OFWs. One of its advocacies is to help OFWs become more investment-savvy to protect them from financial risks.

The BSP also said it hoped the sale of OFW bonds would help to bolster the domestic capital market.

Land Bank estimates said that out of every dollar OFWs earn, 60 cents stays in the host country.

Ouster of labor attaché in Qatar sought

By JEROME ANING
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—A Philippine labor official is object of an ouster petition by overseas Filipino workers for his alleged neglect of seven Filipino welders stranded in Qatar.

The group Migrante International, which has chapters in Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, is circulating calls for the ouster of labor attaché Hector Cruz.

Cruz, an officer of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office in the Qatari capital Doha, reportedly failed to help the welders pursue their complaint against their employer.

Cruz has denied the charges, saying the workers brought their complaint to him only after an out-of-court settlement with their employer did not materialize.

But Migrante said Cruz failed to provide the welders with an interpreter during a hearing of their case. The welders had claimed Cruz was more intent on having them deported rather than helping them pursue their case.

Migrante quoted one of the welders, Willy Catian, who said that instead of providing them the needed assistance and giving full support to their case, Cruz supposedly told him, "I don't care if you win the case or not, what is important is that I can work for your immediate deportation."

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY

Top tips for handling your money in 2009

Editor's Note: This is a partnership between INQUIRER.net and Citibank to help readers handle their personal finances well.

The year 2008 has been a challenging year. Oil soared high triggering an increase in prices of commodities from rice and sugar to canned goods and bread. But it also slumped, resulting in rollback of prices at the gas pump and in transportation fares.

Inflation reached double digit levels but recorded its lowest low as well. It was this year that the world felt the effects of a global financial crisis. Thousands of workers in many countries have lost their jobs and homes as corporations and financial institutions buckled under the financial crisis.

Filipinos are not exempted. Crisis is in the air and many are taking stock and preparing for what may lie ahead. That includes managing finances better.

Some finance-savvy people share below how they are handling their finances in the midst of a global financial crunch:

Question: What have you done this year to manage your finances better?

Heinz Bulos, editor-in-chief, Money Sense magazine:

My wife and I are Quicken types and it's easy to track where our money goes since we normally use credit cards and checks for transactions. But it's the cash withdrawn from the automated teller machine that's always difficult to account for. It's fine if we can't trace a few hundred pesos but when it's thousands of pesos "missing," something's not right. So we decided to centralize everything using a simple petty cash system—each of us can only replenish our cash every week once expenses are accounted for with proper receipts.

Karen Galarpe, blogger—Open for Business at www.inquirer.net, freelance editor and speaker on financial issues:

I took a long hard look at my spending and have cut down wherever I can. For instance, I now patronize a salon that doesn't charge as much as the salon I used to go to, but still gives quality service. I also looked for a new school for my son that charges a more reasonable tuition fee yet still gives quality education. I patronize more Filipino products rather than imported ones which more often than not, cost more. In short, I have become more conscious about getting more value for my money without resorting to deprivation. I have also continued my habit of writing down my expenses and checking if I'm living within my means.

Judith Go, Citigold Wealth Management Director, Citibank Philippines:

Crisis or no crisis, people need to review their finances every so often to look for areas where one can improve. It could be that the year before, you were setting aside 10 percent of your income, and this year, you will target a higher saving rate. Personally, I realigned my investment portfolio and went for a moderate-aggressive strategy. I know that the markets will recover and I want to take advantage of the tremendous upside when that happens.

Alijeffty Gonzales, Registered Financial Planner, www.acgadvisors.net

2008 will stand out as the year when classic principles of investments like diversification were turned upside down; the commonly accepted principle of bonds being inversely correlated to stocks does not seem to hold anymore as both dropped at the same time. As this may affect the liquidity of my portfolio (I don't want to be forced to a selling position when prices are low), the first thing I did was to establish a cash position that is twice as large as I normally would require. This came from the de rigueur cost-cutting of non-essential expenses and identifying new areas for generating income.

Question: What steps are you taking or will take to weather the financial crisis?

Heinz Bulos:

I'm all for a little belt-tightening and some sacrifice, but cost-cutting goes only so far (plus it's not a lot of fun). So we're focusing on increasing the income side. It's not enough to diversify our income sources, working with different companies on ongoing projects. We realize it's very important to own the source of income itself, and that means focusing on our own business. We found a profitable market niche that works for us and we have lined up numerous projects in the coming year. We believe there are opportunities even in a financial crisis.

Karen Galarpe:

I look for ways to increase my income without wearing myself down. I look for and work on projects that would be worth my while. In other words, I don't just jump on any opportunity, but study wisely the pros and cons. I have also continued being diligent in saving, and have taken steps to diversify my investments. I hope to increase my savings rate this 2009.

Judith Go:

Where I used to think twice about spending for wants, now I think thrice, even four times, until I convince myself not to go ahead. This is something I will keep doing even when the crisis is fully contained and we start to see a turnaround. I'm fortunate that this is something my kids have picked up as well—they are quite responsible when it comes to spending their allowance—and I hope that they'll continue to be this way as they grow into adulthood.

INQUIRER.net and Citibank invite readers to ask questions regarding financial matters. Send your questions to personal_finance@inquirer.net. Readers are solely responsible for their own investment decisions and should thus conduct their own research and due diligence and obtain professional advice. INQUIRER.net will not be liable for any loss or damage caused by a reader's reliance on information obtained from our web site.

Maharlika – PinoyStyle

RUSHES SPECIAL

Favorite '08 interviews

MANILA, Philippines—Three golden girls and a golden guy were among Bayani San Diego Jr's favorite interviewees in the past year. San Diego's account:

"There's Mila del Sol, original 'Sarong Girl' of Philippine movies. After making her debut in 'Giliw Ko' in 1939, the LVN superstar had breakfast in Malacañang with President Manuel Quezon. My chat with Ms. Mila took unexpected, and engaging, twists and turns.

"The second golden girl is the irrepressible Anita Linda, who explained her reason for not attending the Cinemanila awards rites in Malacañang last October, thus: 'It was my gardening day. I also cleaned out the garage. My hands were greasy. My hair was dirty.'

"But this much-awarded artist is proud of her Cinemanila Best Actress citation for her stellar work in 'Adela'—it's her first international trophy.

"And there's Gloria Romero, gracious movie queen. On Dec. 16, eve of her 75th birthday, she recalled how she struggled with not a few cuss words in her latest movie, 'Fuchsia.' She also revealed what goes on in her mind during dramatic scenes—reminiscences of sad moments, like losing her mom after World War II and taking care of husband Juancho Gutierrez in his last days.

"I never had face time with Australian-Canadian blogger Brian Gorrell, who turned Philippine media upside down in March when he started his scorching tell-all on Manila's 'high' society. But his candor and humor shone through in our e-mail exchanges and phone chats, earning him a place on my list."

Acid test

Marinel R. Cruz was deeply touched by this friendship "in an industry where most relationships are fleeting." Her choice of best interview in 2008 is the one she did in June with actors Phillip Salvador, senators Jinggoy Estrada and Bong Revilla shortly after their buddy, Rudy "Daboy" Fernandez, was laid to rest.

She recalls: "Their answers to all my questions were spontaneous and straightforward. Did Daboy's death make them even closer? Phillip's reply: 'Pinagbuklod kami ni Daboy —magasawa, magkapatid, magkakaibigan. I'd take a bullet for [any one of] them.'

"And how were they all holding up? I asked. Jinggoy said he still constantly thought of everything that happened. Bong waxed philosophical, saying, 'Kung oras mo na, oras mo na. You just have to do good things and be ready.'

"But the trio also had fun during the interview, teasing one another. Who dated the most women? I asked. Bong quipped, 'Sino pa, e 'di si Daboy! Wala na naman s'ya; 'di na siya makakapagreklamo.' Jinggoy added, 'Si Daboy, very discreet. Si Bong, very indiscreet.' Phillip would not let that pass; he asked Jinggoy, 'Hindi ka ba nabubuking?' Bong butted in, 'Palaging nababato ng asawa 'yan.'"

ERIK ARAZAS

Charo Santos-Concio: The interview was unhurried; the subject was focused and in the moment.

Cruz also found Daboy's son, Mark Anthony Fernandez, forthright, if a bit vulnerable, during a conversation in September. Before he sat down with the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Cruz recalls, "Mark had turned down all requests for interviews." This portion of their chat all but broke her heart:

"I asked him, 'So, you're a little okay now?' He said, 'I'd like to think I am—though I doubt that I'll really ever be."

Possibly the most publicized show biz breakup last year was that of Dingdong Dantes and Karylle. Cruz feels she saw it coming.

"During my interview with Karylle for the story, 'My Sexy Boyfriend' (Sept. 11), she seemed more reserved than usual when asked about their biggest fight as a couple. She said, 'I'd feel weird answering that alone.'

"Shortly after that, news of their split-up broke. I later caught up with Dingdong on a movie set in Sucat, Parañaque. Like Karylle, he refused to discuss the issue by himself, saying, 'We promised each other to answer all questions together. I would like things to happen on her terms,' A week later, K confirmed the breakup."

Rematch

The first time Emmie G. Velarde interviewed Rudy Fernandez was just after his separation from Alma Moreno. The last time was six weeks before he lost a long and painful battle with cancer. What Velarde remembers most acutely about that last sit-down was how Daboy did everything to make her feel comfortable:

"He looked well, he was bubbly, but I knew he was sick, of course, and he knew I didn't feel good about that. LT (Lorna) said a TV show wanted to send a crew to sit in but that Rudy just wanted to spend a quiet afternoon with 'an old friend he hadn't seen in a while.'

"He reminded me of that very first interview '21 years ago to be exact.' I said, yes, he was a tough nut who refused to say anything about Alma. He promised to make up for that by answering everything I'd ask that day. He did."

Needless to say, Daboy is Velarde's pick—not just because "it was the last long interview he gave and held nothing back," but more so because "he wanted so much for me to learn as much as possible from his own experience—the very essence, for me, of generosity."

The only other memorable 2008 interview for Velarde was with ABS-CBN president Charo Santos-Concio. "It was unhurried—almost casual—but packed in equal parts with hard facts and precious personal sharing."

Santos-Concio herself Velarde found to be "focused, in the moment... she draws you into a space where the exchange is free-flowing and unguarded." ***(Philippine Daily Inquirer)***

David Pomeranz gives the gift of a smile

By POCHOLO CONCEPCION
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MANILA, Philippines—As a pop songwriter, David Pomeranz has worked with dozens of artists, foremost of which is Barry Manilow. One of Pomeranz's albums, "Born For You," is the biggest-selling international pop album of all time in the Philippines.

This may sound inconsequential to critics, who find his songs a bit sappy. But the typical sentimental Pinoy loves Pomeranz so much, that the singer seems to be always here for a gig or two.

This time he's performing to raise funds for Operation Smile—a volunteer organization that has treated thousands of Filipinos with facial deformities.

Excerpts from his phone interview with Inquirer Entertainment:

How did you become involved with Operation Smile?

My managers brought it to my attention and I learned about what the group is doing … It's a very powerful and much needed group … it's a miraculous thing, for the last 20 years there have been 20,000 Filipinos who've undergone surgery for free. One of them, Chadleen Lacdo-o, happens to be my guest in the concerts. She's 13 and has a gorgeous voice and a hefty future in the music business. She's one of the recipients of the surgery … When you see her, there's no sign of anything, no scar, nothing. It's just utterly dramatic.

You were very young when you got interested in music. How did it happen?

I was 1 or 2 years old when I became aware of my parents always playing records in the house, everything from Harry Belafonte to Tchaikovsky, symphonies, Broadway music, West Side Story … and I would sit and just cry. Rock 'n' roll was also around and I started to play drums, guitar and piano and joined bands. The girl that never looked at me in class, all of a sudden, started noticing me. So I thought there's a future in it. Music is really the most deeply feeling part of my life.

Your first two albums had a blues and jazz sound. It was also during this period when you started performing alongside Rod Stewart, Billy Joel, Badfinger, among others. What do you remember most from these gigs?

Playing with Rod Stewart in front of some 10,000 people was one of the huge events I had ever done in my life. That was in 1970 or '71. Playing with those people was a lesson ... they're all great artists and I got to watch them, see what they did and learn from them.

What did you learn from them?

All of them have got something that you take with you. The ones I'm most impressed with are those who connect with the audience. There's an unsung artist, his name is John Sebastian. He was the lead singer for a group called the Lovin' Spoonful. If you saw "Woodstock" the movie, he walks out on the stage in front of 500,000 people with his acoustic guitar, only. But I've seen him in New York in a club called the Bitter End and watched him embrace the audience in a way that I'd never imagine. He was so warm … you'll just love him. And he was doing it intentionally. I thought, "There you go. That's what I want to create onstage." So I would say he was a big influence in my life.

But you became famous as a pop songwriter for so many artists. Can you name five of your songs that have meant a lot to you?

Obviously the Manilow ones ("Maybe the Old Songs," "Trying to Get the Feeling Again") were very big hits in the '70s … There's "It's in Every One of Us," which has been a huge part of my life, it's been sung all over the world and translated in different languages … "Born For You" is one of my favorites. There's a newer one, "The Trail of Broken Dreams," which is on an album called "On This Day." I wrote it with a Russian rock star.

Did you make a lot of money from the Manilow hits alone?

Well, yeah … it can be very lucrative.

You've also written songs for TV, film and the theater. How fulfilling are these projects, like do you just deal with them as a job that pays well?

There are oftentimes when you get an assignment and it's a job. But while you're writing it you have to take it to heart, make it intimate and personal. Otherwise it comes out as a terrible song. So you have to find out something about it that means something to you. My favorite assignments are theatrical ones, the musical theater where you get to write for characters and dramatic situations.

David Pomeranz is currently performing in Manila to raise funds for Operation Smile—a volunteer organization that has treated thousands of Filipinos with facial deformities.

The Philippines is one of your favorite destinations as a performer. What's so special about us?

I'm sure you do know. The people here are extremely dear, uniquely so, actually. I've been all over the world but in the Philippines it's quite a beautiful group … I feel blessed for the opportunity to be with you guys … It's my 22nd trip here and I look forward to more.

Is it true that you have the biggest number of records sold in the Philippines?

It's the best-selling international pop album. The other one that sold as well is Jose Mari Chan's Christmas album. My album is "Born For You" and I think it sold over 500,000 copies just here. It's [a] pretty wild [achievement].

How do you get the energy and inspiration to keep on writing music after all these years?

I don't know. I mean, as long as I'm alive in this body, I seem to be moved to create music and songs. I love writing songs and I'm gonna do it till the day the body goes, "That's enough, go get another body." But that's all I ever wanted to do and I'm doing exactly what I wanted to do. It's always new for me and always a challenge.

Maharlika – Opinyon

EDITORIAL

Folly and prophecy

In truth, it is easy to make "predictions" about the future, if the predictions are couched in convenient, noncommittal language. It is when we require the seers and fortunetellers who crowd the pages and the newscasts to name specific events or specific persons in specific language that the "predictions" become problematic.

At this time last year, nobody could have predicted what turned out to be the biggest stories of 2008: the worst economic downturn in 70 years, the near-landslide election of a black first-term senator to the White House, and the return of Joc-joc Bolante and the revived public interest in the four-year-old fertilizer scam.

This is not to say that some astute observers had not read the signs correctly; there were economists who sensed something deeply wrong with the US economy; political operatives who placed their bets on Barack Obama to win big, even before Obama won the first primary in Iowa; lawyers who saw the imminence of Bolante's deportation.

But the scope of the global economic turmoil, the scale of Obama's victory, the insatiableness of the Filipino public's hunger for the latest revelations about the P728-million fertilizer scam—in general these and similar events, even those relatively predictable incidents like Israel's all-out assault on Hamas in the Gaza Strip or the inevitable politicization of the Olympic torch relay, caught the world by surprise.

Would anyone have predicted, in December 2007, that the largest street demonstration against the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration in 2008 would happen in February, as a protest against the ZTE-NBN scandal, instead of in December, as outrage boiled over against Charter change? Did anyone predict that the worst public-relations disaster to hit the Philippine National Police since terrorist bomber Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi slipped out of the Camp Crame general headquarters would strike in 2008, not over another inexplicable escape but because of over-generous allowances for police generals attending a conference in Russia?

If history teaches us anything, it is that the human capacity for folly, for immoderate greed, for self-defeating behavior is endless. Who could have predicted that, in the midst of the worst economic turmoil in three generations, would explode another financial scandal, the $50-billion Madoff scam? Who could have predicted that, under a president with real ties to Mindanao (President Arroyo spent part of her growing-up years in Iligan City), the administration would wreck this decade's hopes for peace with Moro insurgents through an ill-conceived (not to mention unconstitutional) memorandum of agreement?

None of this is to say that we cannot extrapolate this year's trends from last year's events. We can and should expect the global economic slowdown to hurt Philippine business, both big and small; we can expect a general easing in commodity prices; we should expect the administration to try to prolong its grip on power.

But we must also be open to other possibilities. Who knows? The year 2009 may surprise us with great stories of entrepreneurial derring-do or heartwarming examples of profound civic engagement. Our capacity for transcending our limitations is similarly endless. That is why, as a wise man once said, it is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future.

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I am Filipino

Commentary

By ALEXANDER L. LACSON
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

One of the most important things we need today as a people is a beautiful way of looking at ourselves as Filipinos, a positive and healthy image of ourselves, a wonderful definition of ourselves as a people. Our children especially need to believe that there is greatness and beauty in us as a people and as a race.

So much beauty and greatness can spring from a beautiful mind and a faithful heart.

But loving ourselves as Filipinos is not only patriotism or nationalism. There is a reason higher than that. It is primarily about stewardship. It is loving what God has given us. God gave to each one of us the Filipino and the Philippines, for us to love and care for. But how is the Filipino in our hands today? How is the Philippines, the land God gave to us as a people, in our hands today?

It is for this reason that I wrote the poem below. I give this poem as my humble gift to all of you, my fellow Filipinos. You are the brothers and sisters, the family of people, God gave to me.

It is my hope that this poem will help develop in us and in our children a healthy sense of faith and love in the Filipino, in ourselves as a people. For truly, our Creator wants us to have faith in and love for the Filipino.

Here it is:

I am Filipino. I am a child of the One God who is the Creator of all that is in our world and the universe. I am as perfect and as beautiful as my Creator planned me to be, for God created me in His image, out of His perfect love.

I am a beloved child of God, like everyone else in our world, no less than the stars above or anyone else below. As such, I have equal right and claim to all the beauty and bounty that God provided in my country and in the world.

I am an equal part of the family of humanity. I am therefore a sibling to all the men and women of our world, brethren to all Christians, to all Muslims, to all Jews, to all Buddhists, and all other peoples whose faiths lie somewhere else.

I am Filipino. My Creator planted me on a specific spot on earth, where the sun always shines, in an archipelago of 7,107 wonderful islands, which the whole world calls the "Pearl of the Orient." Pilipinas is the country God gave to me and my people. It is the birthplace of my race. It is the home of the Filipino.

The beauty and richness of my country lured many mighty powers of the world to invade our shores. So today, my blood is a mixture of the best and the finest of the West and the East. My mind is an heir to all the great thoughts of the West, and the great virtues of the East. My heart beats with the romanticism of the West and the passion of the East.

I am Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Juan Luna, Ninoy Aquino and all those who fought for our land to become a nation of free people. I am the grandeur of Banaue, the enchantment of Boracay, the serenity of Manila Bay, and the depth and breadth of Tubbataha Reef.

I am Filipino. My Creator's plan is for me to live my life as a Filipino and therefore, in my heart and in my mind, I shall always be a Filipino wherever I may be in the world. God wants me to belong to the Filipino family and as such, I am a "kapatid" [brother] to anyone and everyone who is Filipino, wherever he or she may be on earth.

You will know me by the word "po" in my sentences. You will know my children by their "mano po." You will know me by the smile on my face and the warmth of my hospitality. Most important of all, you will know me by my loving and caring heart when you are in need of help, even if you are a stranger.

As a child of God, my Creator has a beautiful story for me and my people. And the story we see today is but a fleeting portion of that beautiful story that has yet to fully unfold before the eyes of the world.

I am Filipino. I am who I am today because of the role God wants me to play.

I am born to succeed. God has equipped me, within me and around me, with all the essentials I need to succeed in this world. God truly wants the highest, the best, and the most beautiful for me, because I am His child.

I am destined to be great. God planted seeds of beauty and greatness in me. He truly wants me to be great and beautiful, for God truly wants me to add more beauty and greatest to our world.

I am Filipino. I am born of freedom, in a free country. As such, I dedicate my freedom to ensuring that my people and country shall always remain free. I shall use my freedom to help other peoples, in my country or in other parts of the world, gain their own freedom.

I am born of love, out of God's immeasurable love, in a country and in a world that can only be made beautiful by love. Love is the reason why God made me. It is what He wants me to bring into this world, so love shall be who I am.

I am born as part of the whole, as part of the answer to the question, as part of the solution to the problem, as part of the hope to our people. I am born to help the Filipino become great not only in the eyes of the world but, more so, in the eyes of our Lord.

I am Filipino. I am a faithful child of God. I shall live my life to do God's work on earth, to help build a beautiful country for my Filipino family, and a better world for all humanity. And soon the world shall see the full measure of the greatness of Filipino, for truly the world has yet to see what God can do to and through a child, like the Filipino, who is faithful to the Lord.

I am Filipino.

Alexander Lacson is author of the book 12 Little Things Every Filipino Can Do To Help Our Country. *Email: alacsonph@yahoo.com.*

Rizal Day ceremonies

Looking Back

By AMBETH OCAMPO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Since I write about Jose Rizal so many times throughout the year, it becomes quite a challenge when this column appears on Dec. 30, Rizal Day.

The first time I woke up at dawn to attend the simple ceremonies in Rizal Park was in 1985, the last time Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos presided over the wreath-laying ceremony. The President was in his signature tailor-fit barong and Imelda was in a "terno" gown whose hue of blue was probably based on the royal blue in our flag. In the group of Cabinet members and other high officials, Education Minister Jaime C. Laya stood out because of his windswept or hastily combed hair.

Fidel V. Ramos went through the same ritual effortlessly because of his military training, his appreciation for history and respect for protocol. Joseph Estrada did not show up, and his spokesman told a stunned nation that Rizal Day was not on the President's program! Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who spends the Christmas holidays in Baguio City, does not fly back to Manila for Rizal Day but presides over a wreath-laying at the Rizal Monument off Burnham Park in Baguio, although she did preside over Rizal Day ceremonies in Manila in 2003.

In December 1986, Cory Aquino was in Rizal Park in signature yellow. The only thing different was the rumor that the honor guards were not allowed to carry live ammunition in their guns and that all the sound that came with the 21-gun salute was made with blanks.

Then as now the program is swift and simple: The president arrives shortly before 7 a.m. and is accorded arrival honors. Escorted by a military officer in gala attire, he or she walks briskly by the honor guard to the sound of band music. Then everything is quiet as everyone takes his place at the base of the flagpole. The president leads a group in going through the motion of pulling the neat white cord that hoists the giant Philippine flag which unfurls in the air to the tune of the National Anthem. After this, the group walks to the other side of the flagpole and take their assigned places. Then an oversized wreath, carried by two soldiers, is brought to the Rizal monument by the president. When the wreath is installed, the president stands motionless as "Taps" is played and a 21-gun salute is made. To make things grand, cannons from the opposite side of Roxas Boulevard boom in the morning air, the first shot producing frightened shrieks and wincing from people who did not know it was coming.

As all this is happening around 7:05 a.m., the exact time Rizal was shot, an eerie sound comes from the bay as all the ships in the harbor sound their fog horns. Finally the president returns to the waiting limousine, signaling the end to the official ceremonies to mark Rizal Day. It is over in less than half an hour.

There are usually other things happening on the fringes of the park in the morning of Rizal Day. Before the president arrives, the Knights of Rizal, in full regalia, march from Fort Santiago, retracing the last steps of the hero from his prison cell to his place of execution. The Knights and their ladies marching slowly take their places on the left side of the flagpole facing the monument; the right side is reserved for the diplomatic corps, government officials, and members of the Rizal family who are kind enough to make a sacrifice and go to Rizal Park early to lay their own wreath after the president has left.

After the official and semi-official ceremonies, those in the fringes of the park are able to come closer to pay homage to the hero. These are the Rizalistas who revere Rizal as God, Prophet and Savior of the Philippines. Many of them hiked barefoot from the magic mountains: Makiling, Banahaw, and Arayat all the way to the Luneta. Only they seem to appreciate the fact that the Rizal monument is more than a monument. Few people know or realize that Rizal's bones are buried under the monument. It is not just a memorial. It is a tomb. Thus, any other commemoration elsewhere, no matter how solemn is simply not the same.

I realized two things only recently. First, when the President lays the wreath on the Rizal monument on June 12, it is done to honor the father of the nation. If the President cannot lay the wreath in Rizal Park on June 12 and Dec. 30, the vice president, the chief justice, the president of the Senate, or the speaker of the House should be around to express the thanks of a grateful nation.

Second, it only dawned on me recently that we should also lay a wreath or light candles in front of the Rizal monument on Nov. 1 every year, the day the nation and people remember their dead.

It is unfortunate that Rizal Day, Dec. 30, falls between Christmas and New Year because it can be easily forgotten in the merrymaking. It is unfortunate that the official ceremonies that should make the nation remember happen so early in the morning that it is lost on everyone who is not participating in Rizal Park or the other Rizal monuments around the country. We officially pay homage to the hero while the nation sleeps. Many of us forget the person who is the reason for the holiday as we enjoy the cold December mornings under the sheets, nursing hangovers or still digesting food from feasting that began on Christmas Eve.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu.

Maharlika – Samu't Sari

MIFICPA host Christmas Party at Hafadai Beach Hotel

More than 30 Filipino accountants in the CNMI with the Marianas Institute of Filipino CPAs and Accountants enjoyed their post-Christmas Party at Hafadai Beach Hotel's Magalahi Top Lounge 19th floor on Dec. 26, 2008.

Celebration started at 6pm up to 10 pm or "until you drop" for the Bud family lovers and red/white wine fans.

"Yes, it was an open bar! And bottomless iced tea and sodas, too! The dinner buffet was just as delicious," according to one of the members.

The party featured MIFICPA's brand of wholesome fun—lots of singing, dancing, gift-giving, and *kwentuhan* to the max.

This was Irene Santiago's last project as the outgoing president. The upcoming president, Melvin Malvar, announced that the induction of the newly elected officers will be in February. ***(PR)***

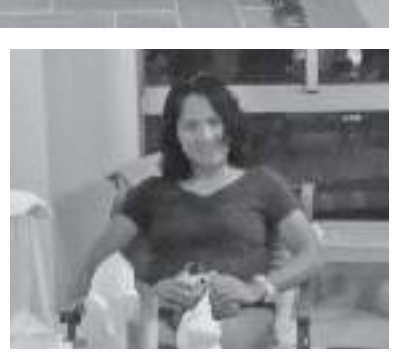
MIFICPA founder Jun Banadera with CIC general manager Nel Matanguihan, Joeten and Ace manager Deo and Loise.

A group shot of MIFICPA members during their Christmas party.

Singing accountants.

MIFICPA members during the exchange gift portion of their Christmas party.

Enjoying the Christmas tree.



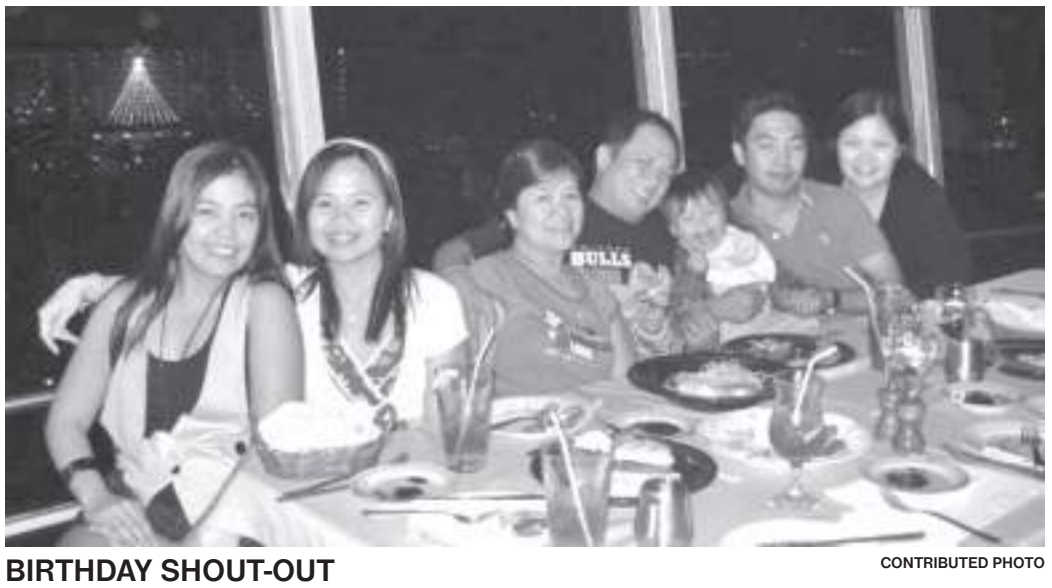
Babes Estrada, of Century Insurance Co., enjoys her stay at the Magalahi Lounge.

Cris Bucalig of PTI with Irene Sanitago of Shirley's Coffee Shop and Aileen Indino of PTI.

Robert Reyes of CTSI and son with MIFICPA president Irene Santiago.

Mr. and Mrs. Ritz Villadiego of HIS and PIC, respectively.

Jho Doreza of Burger and Comer relaxing at sunset view of the Magalahi Lounge.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BIRTHDAY SHOUT-OUT

Happy birthday greetings to Janice, seen here second from left celebrating the milestone at the 360 Restaurant. After dinner, the celebrant posed with her guests, from left, Jaja, Didith, Kleng, baby Pauline, Roy and Connie. "We hope you enjoyed your special day and we pray that you'll have many more birthdays in the years to come." Greetings come from Flibert & Friends!

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BON VOYAGE

Marianas Medical Center staff hosts a going-away party for nurse Joyce, second from right, during happy hour at PIC. Joyce has been with Marianas Medical for nearly a year. She is returning to the Philippines to take her NCLEX "and we are confident that she will pass it. Good luck and it's been fun working with you." The staff at MMC.

Young Style

Why do bugs invade your home in winter?

By VALERIE STRAUSS
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—We bet that on cold wintry days, many of you love to snuggle up in your warm home and, every now and then, pop into the kitchen for a snack.

Unfortunately, plenty of creepy-crawly critters like to do the same thing!

Winter is the time when bugs—such as camel crickets and brown marmorated stink bugs, ladybird beetles and boxelder bugs—invade your house without an invitation.

The season can be tough for such creatures, said Michael Raupp, an entomologist (an expert on insects) at the University of Maryland.

In winter the air is cold, the ground is hard and many trees have no leaves. So bugs do what they have to do to survive.

Monarch butterflies head south to warmer climates. Ants crowd in deep underground colonies and eat food they have been storing all year.

Many insects go into a deep sleep called diapause, Raupp said. There are different kinds of diapause, but all are similar to hibernation, a time when bigger animals become inactive in the cold. Insects go into an inactive period, too, but it often isn't when the temperature dips.

THE WASHINGTON POST
University of Maryland entomologist Michael Raupp says camel crickets (above) don't sing but they can jump: This inch-tall leaper can clear the side of a foot-tall terrarium. Below, brown marmorated stink bugs are real stinkers when they invade your home. A true bug, these insects go through a complete metamorphosis.

They rely on more dependable signals in the environment. For example, many insects can tell how much sunlight there is each day. They use that cue to tell them when to shut down.

Insect Fact

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

Some insects survive the winter cold by producing a chemical called glycerol, which allows the fluid in their bodies to drop below freezing without harming them.

Bugs are cold-blooded, meaning that their internal temperature is the same as the outside temperature. They can't move very much when it gets below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, Raupp said.

So they search for any place that is warm.

"They are looking for protection," Raupp said. "These guys have been doing this for 300 million years, so they don't really know they are coming into your house. The home is a recent event in terms of their evolutionary behavior."

They enter through tiny cracks or come in unnoticed on your clothes or shoes.

Raupp doesn't like stink bugs in his house, because "they are really pests." They stink.

"I annihilate them," he said.

He is kinder to ladybugs, also called ladybird beetles.

Coming Attractions in 2009

(c) 2008, The Washington Post

KidsPost welcomes the new year with a few holidays you might not spot on the calendar you received as a holiday present.

JANUARY

1: Don't just say "happy new year"; say "happy birthday" to two Revolutionary War heroes: Paul Revere (born probably in 1734 or 1735) and Betsy Ross (born in 1752).

3: The Great Fruitcake Toss is held in Colorado.

FEBRUARY

6: Bubble Gum Day. Donate 50 cents to charity and you might get to chew bubble gum at school.

18: It's the 79th anniversary of a cow being milked while flying in an airplane.

National Pet Dental Health Month. (Don't let Fido chew gum!)

MARCH

2-8: National Cheerleading Week.

National Pig Month.

National Umbrella Month.

APRIL

2: April Fool's Day. *

12: Big Wind Day. The highest winds ever recorded (231 mph) were documented in New Hampshire in 1934.

MAY

6: No Homework Day.

10: Mother's Day.

National Bike Month.

JUNE

5: 226th anniversary of the first hot-air balloon flight.

21: Father's Day.

National Candy Month. (Yum!)

JULY

1: The first U.S. zoo opened in Philadelphia in 1874.

19: National Ice Cream Day.

National Family Reunion Month. (Have one at the zoo; don't forget the ice cream.)

AUGUST

1: Girlfriend's Day

7-9: Twinsburg Twins Days (world's biggest gathering of twins and triplets).

19: Root beer float invented in 1893.

SEPTEMBER

7: Great Bathtub Race in Nome, Alaska.

7: Grandparents Day.

22: Eat Dinner as a Family Day. (Don't forget to invite the grandparents!)

OCTOBER

1: Disney World opened in 1971.

16: Dictionary Day.

Squirrel Awareness Month.

NOVEMBER

1: Hockey goalie mask invented in 1959.

20: Universal Children's Day.

22-28: National Game and Puzzle Week.

DECEMBER

4: National Dice Day.

21: Pilgrims land in Plymouth, Mass., in 1620.

Bingo's Birthday Month. (The game was invented in 1929.)

■■■

* Fooled ya! It's April 1.

In Celebration of Her New Life

Susana Sablan Camacho Villagomez

Fondly known as "Chana/Nan Chana/Chana Juan Kiyu"
August 3, 1918 — December 29, 2008

In her new life, she now joins:
Husband: †Juan Seman Villagomez
Father/Mother: †Luis Taimanao Camacho & +Ramona Reyes Sablan Camacho
Father/Mother-in-law: †Manuel Castro Villagomez & +Antonia Seman Villagomez

Brothers/Sisters/In-laws/Nephews and Nieces:
†Vicente Sablan Camacho
†Albert Sablan & †Primitiva Lg. Camacho
†Mariana Camacho & †Francisco C. Deleon Guerrero
†Ricardo T. Borja
†Joaquin & †Soledad Villagomez
†Jesus & †Joaquina Villagomez
†Jose & †Antonia Villagomez
†Vicente & +Rosalia Villagomez
†Luise P. Villagomez
†Anuncia F. Camacho
†Max C. Deleon Guerrero
†Carlos Patrick P. Camacho Jr.
†Vertilia C. Guerrero

Her memories will forever live in the hearts of her:
Reared daughter: Nora Villagomez & Raymond Lg. Borja & Family
Sisters: Antonia Sablan Camacho & Family
Trinidad Camacho Borja & Family
Margarita Sablan Camacho
Benita Camacho & Jerry Kortz & Family
Brothers: Froilan Sablan & Maria Smith Camacho & Family
Carlos Sablan & Lourdes (Winnie) P. Camacho & Family
Brother-in-law: Manuel Seman Villagomez & Family
Sisters-in-law: Estefania Flores Camacho & Family
Rosario Arriola Camacho & Family
Caregiver: Trinidad C. Butardo

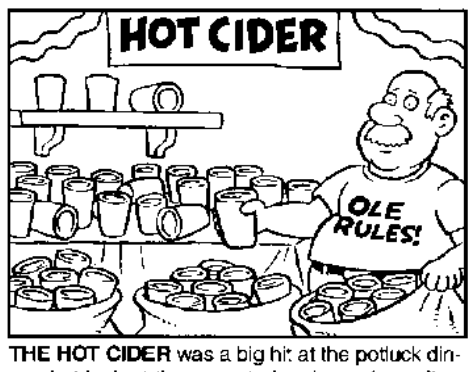
She is also survived by numerous cousins, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, god-sons, and god-daughters.

Daily mass of intentions is offered every 6:00 a.m. at Kristo Rai Church. Nightly rosary is being said at 7:30 p.m. at Kristo Rai Church.

On Tuesday, January 6, 2009, her body will be escorted from the Borja's Funeral Home to Kristo Rai Church at 7:00 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be at 10:00 a.m. followed by the interment services at the Mount Carmel Cemetery in Chalan Kanoa.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Thank You for your thoughts and prayers.

From the Family



THE HOT CIDER was a big hit at the potluck dinner, but look at the mess to be cleaned up afterward. How many cups can you find in the picture?

Answer: We found 43. How about you?

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

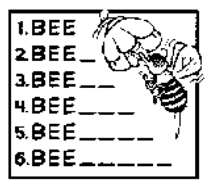
Illustrated by David Coulson

SWING DANCING IS BACK! Using an expression from the Swing Era, "jump and jive," we've made a puzzle for you. Replace the letters in the expression with the digits 0 through 9 so that you have a correct addition problem. The same letters get the same digits.

One Answer: J=8, U=3, M=0, P=9, A=4, N=5, D=2, I=7, V=6, E=1. (8309 + 452 = 8761.)

"BEE" CAREFUL SOLVING THIS ONE! In this puzzle all of the words get progressively longer, and they all start with BEE. The following hints should help:

1. A busy worker (given).
2. Source of sugar.
3. A gray tree.
4. An electronic device.
5. Used in making crayons.
6. Brand of chewing gum.



Answers: 1. Bee. 2. Beet. 3. Beech. 4. Beeper. 5. Beeswax. 6. Beefsteak.

FIND THE BIG WORDS!

Using the definitions and anagrams below, find the eight eight-letter words that fit into the framework pictured on the left. For each definition, the letters in the two anagram words must be unscrambled and used to form the word asked for.

DEFINITIONS:	ANAGRAMS:
1. Lacking conviction.	murk + wale
2. A cluster of flowers.	slob + moss
3. A lucky charm.	slat + main
4. A stamp of approval.	mail + hark
5. A bad homeowner.	muds + roll
6. Vests have them.	sole + harm
7. Fixed or motionless	boil + mime
8. Barely within quality limits	nail + gram

Answers: 1. Unkempt. 2. Blossoms. 3. Talisman. 4. Hallmark. 5. Slumlord. 6. Armholes. 7. Immobile. 8. Marginal.

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Dogs and joggers

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: My dog, "Sandy," gets very excited when people pass us while we're out walking. She is not mean, but she likes to bark and tries to paw at or jump up as people get close. Sandy gets particularly excited when a jogger passes us. How can I stop her from doing this?—Bill in Boulder, Colo.

DEAR BILL: Getting Sandy adjusted to all the exciting activity on the sidewalk will take some time. Start by honing her basic obedience skills at home, making sure she will respond to your commands. On your daily walks, have her sit and stay at random times. When a jogger approaches, move to the side of the walk, and have Sandy sit and stay. (Of course, keep her on a leash at all times during walks.)

Next, teach her not to react to sudden movements. At home, put Sandy on a leash. Throw a tennis ball across the room or hallway and say "Off!" or "Nyaah!" When Sandy leaps to chase the ball, tug the leash firmly and repeat "Off/Nyaah!" When Sandy responds to your command, praise her.

Repeat this exercise in other locations, indoors or out, with few distractions. Try it with other objects, or a willing friend who can play the "jogger."

Finally, add the command during her daily walks—when a person approaches, use the command if she starts toward them. You may need to sit Sandy down at first and wait for the person to pass, giving the "Off/Nyaah!" command if needed. But gradually begin training her to obey this command from the heel.

■ ■ ■

Send your tips, questions and comments to Paw's Corner, c/o King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or e-mail them to pawscorner@hotmail.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

■ Researchers have discovered that humans aren't the only ones to imbibe alcohol on a regular basis. It seems that the tiny pen-tailed tree shrew makes a habit of consuming naturally fermented palm flower nectar, which has an alcohol content of 3.8 percent—comparable to that of most beers.

■ It was Pulitzer and Nobel prize-winning novelist, short-story writer and journalist Ernest Hemingway who made the following observation: "An intelligent man is sometimes forced to be drunk to spend time with his fools."

■ There are people who spend their time counting the number of times people blink and why, but they still can't explain why an adult in a calm state of mind blinks 15 times per minute, while a newborn baby blinks only twice per minute.

■ A couple more tidbits from the files of musical performers' unusual backstage requirements: Pop and R&B singer Christina Aguilera must have Flintstones vitamins, and singer and actress Mariah Carey insists on having drinking straws with a bend rather than the straight variety.

■ You might be surprised to learn that residents of New York City get a white Christmas roughly only once every four years.

■ Have you ever committed catachresis? I try to avoid it (in this column, at least), but unless you are unusually articulate—or simply don't speak or write much—then it's almost certain that you have. Catachresis is just a fancy term for the misuse of words.

■ Those who study such things say that the most popular seafood in the United States is shrimp, followed by canned tuna in second place and salmon in third.

■ ■ ■

Thought for the Day: "An economist is a surgeon with an excellent scalpel and a rough-edged lancet, who operates beautifully on the dead and tortures the living."—Nicholas Chamfort

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MAGIC MAZE ● — GOOSE

T	F	C	Z	W	T	Q	N	K	I	F	C	Z	W	U
R	D	P	M	J	O	H	T	E	T	C	Z	X	U	S
Y	Q	E	N	L	R	J	E	N	G	B	E	C	Z	X
V	L	T	T	E	I	R	A	S	A	A	P	N	A	L
J	H	L	H	O	N	L	E	D	E	R	C	A	D	Y
W	V	T	I	G	O	L	D	E	N	N	B	T	A	R
P	O	N	L	S	C	F	K	W	I	A	I	G	N	E
M	C	B	R	U	O	Y	K	O	O	C	L	H	A	Z
X	H	A	W	A	I	I	A	N	W	L	U	P	C	S
R	P	O	M	L	J	I	G	S	I	E	B	L	U	E
E	D	B	A	Y	X	R	O	R	E	P	M	E	W	U

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Barnacle	Chinese	Hawaiian	Snow
Blue	Cook your	Orinoco	Solant
Brant	Emperor	Pink-footed	Upland
Canada	Golden	Silly	

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

DIFFICULTY: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Difficult
★★★ GO FIGURE!

	÷		+		10
−		+		x	
	x		−		29
x		x		+	
	+		x		12
25		11		23	

1 2 3 3 4 5 7 8 9

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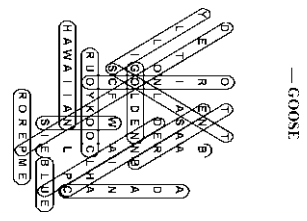
MAGIC MAZE ANSWER



GO FIGURE ANSWER

	23		11		25
12	2	x	1	+	5
	+		x		x
29	3	−	8	x	4
	x		+		
10	7	+	3	÷	9

Cook up a pot of hearty butternut squash soup

Here's a rich-tasting, family-friendly recipe of hearty butternut squash soup that you simply won't want to pass up. No need to precook the fresh squash. Simply toss it in your soup pot to cook with the other ingredients for less than an hour, and then whirl everything together in your blender in minutes. Enjoy the added bonus of a wonderful aroma filling your home, welcoming everyone for nourishment and relaxing conversation around your dinner table.

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons butter
1 large onion, minced
2 stalks of celery diced
4-5 teaspoons (or less) curry powder, according to taste
3 cups peeled (a vegetable peeler works well), seeded and cut-up butternut squash
2 large apples, peeled, cored and chopped
4 cups chicken stock
1 cup half-and-half or heavy cream
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Optional garnishes:
"Apple slice designs" (below), fresh chives or parsley

Melt the butter in a large soup pot. Add onion, celery and salt to taste, stirring 3 minutes. Add curry powder and continue stirring until onion and celery are soft, about 5 more minutes.

Add squash, apples and stock, and bring to a boil. Lower heat to low, cover pot and simmer until squash and apples are very soft, about 35 minutes.

Cool soup slightly (important!) and puree by whirling in batches in a blender. Return the soup to the pot. Stir in the cream, season with salt and pepper and then simmer briefly to heat through. Serve garnished with an apple slice design, parsley or chives.

APPLE SLICE DESIGNS

Slice an apple in half through the middle crosswise. Cut several thin, round slices from each of the halves. Set them on a cutting board, and let your child press tiny cookie cutters through the middle core section of each slice—leaving a cute shape in the middle. Discard the cut-out pieces containing seeds and the core. Nibble on the rest!

"The grandkids are coming!" tip: To encourage healthy apple snacking, keep an assortment of small cookie cutters on hand and use them for making "apple-slice designs." Use tiny pumpkins in fall, Christmas-tree and star-shaped cookie cutters in December, a snowman in January, a heart in February and a bunny for spring.

■ ■ ■

Donna Erickson's award-winning television series "Donna's Day" airs on public television nationwide. Visit www.donnasday.com to find out when it airs on your local PBS station and to sign up for Donna's e-newsletter.

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Life & Style

Beyonce music videos dominate YouTube

A number of high profile musicians have made enormous dents on YouTube: Soulja Boy, Rihanna, the Jonas Brothers and Chris Brown among them.

But Beyonce is giving them all a run for their money.

Her video for "If I Were a Boy" has been watched by more than 34 million on the video-sharing site. In it, Beyonce imagines life if gender roles were reversed between her and her boyfriend (a fictional boyfriend, alas, not Jay-Z).

This offers the particular thrill of seeing Beyonce as a police officer—which, if it ever happened, would surely cause such a rash of speeding (with the hopes of a ticket from the pop star) that roads would resemble "Grand Theft Auto."

The popularity of "If I Were a Boy" is matched by Beyonce's "Single Ladies (Put a Ring On It)." That video has yielded at least 22 million views and inspired countless bedroom copycats.

Whereas "If I Were a Boy" is conceptual and has a narrative, "Single Ladies" is simple, imitable and iconic. It's just Beyonce dancing in a black leotard and heels (and a bizarre metal glove), flanked by two similarly dressed female dancers on a plain white studio set.

AP

Beyonce's video for "If I Were a Boy" has been watched by more than 34 million on the video-sharing site.

The video has spawned dozens and dozens of amateur versions, from the mimicking of a toddler named Arianna to more aggressively serious attempts, like that of a 20-year-old North Carolina native who identifies himself as a Staples employee named Chris or "Angel Pariz."

Beyonce has spoken about how bowled over she is by all the imitations and met some of the dancers. She also joined the "Saturday Night Live" parody of the video with Justin Timberlake and cast members Andy Samberg and Bobby Moynihan. (That video has also been watched by millions online.)

Beyonce and her record label, Sony/BMG, surely hope her latest video, "Diva," also hits a nerve. Released on Dec. 24, it returns the singer to the simple style of her and two dancers in a plain setting—this time an empty warehouse.

It's a grittier and less catchy song, though, and the video hasn't sparked the same attention, drawing less than one million viewers on YouTube so far.

But the popularity of Beyonce's videos only reinforce how important music videos are to the Google-owned YouTube. Many of the most watched videos in YouTube's short history are music videos. (Remember how OK Go's treadmill clip was such a hit in YouTube's infancy?) ***(AP)***

Half brother is accused of embezzling from Dane Cook

WOBURN, Mass. (AP)—The half brother of comedian Dane Cook has pleaded not guilty to embezzling millions from the comedian and was ordered held on $3 million bail.

Darryl McCauley was arraigned Wednesday at Woburn District Court on charges including forgery and larceny. Prosecutors alleged that McCauley, 43, stole the money from Cook while being paid $12,500 a month to act as business manager for Great Dane Enterprises, Inc.

Judge Joseph Jennings ordered McCauley to document the source of any funds used to meet his bail.

Cook's attorney, Joseph Zwicker, described Cook as "very distraught" about the situation. McCauley's attorney, Robert Goldstein, said his client is innocent.

"Mr. McCauley denies taking money from his brother without his consent," he said. "He's ready to confront these allegations."

Prosecutors accused McCauley of transferring funds from Cook's business accounts to his personal accounts between July 2007 and December 2008. In one instance, McCauley forged a $3 million check written from Cook's account to himself, investigators said.

McCauley allegedly used the money to buy four cars, and to take a seven-day trip across the country, during which he rented various cars. Prosecutors say investigators raided a Maine home

AP

In this April 6, 2008 file photo, actor Dane Cook arrives at the "Idol Gives Back" fundraising special of "American Idol" in Los Angeles.

McCauley owned and found $800,000 in cash in a safe.

Assistant Attorney General Rick Grundy also said McCauley talked about opening a restaurant in Ireland. Grundy said investigators have yet to find much of the allegedly stolen money.

Death and Funeral Announcement

† Dolores Cabrera Babauta Palacios

September 15, 1967 - December 29, 2008

In her new life, she now joins her

Grandparents: † Jose Bermudes Cabrera &
† Felimina Dela Cruz Cabrera
† Juan Aguon Babauta &
† Concepcion Crisostimo Babauta

Grandparents-in-Law: † Jose Feha Sakisat &
† Ignacia Muna Sakisat
† Ana Salas Palacios

Father-in-Law: † Estanislao Salas Palacios

She will be dearly missed and remembered in the hearts of her

Husband: Joseph Louis Sakisat Palacios
Children: Jocelyn Nicole & Ryan Agulto (Aiyisha); Jodie Inaycia; Joseph Jr.; and Jhace Stanley
Parents: Joaquin Crisostimo and Remedio Cabrera Babauta
Mother-in-Law: Mercedes Sakisat Palacios
Siblings: Susana C. Babauta & Jose S. Demapan; Francisco C. & MariaFe Babauta
Jose C. & Shrue M. Babauta; Raymond C. & Melinda P. Babauta
Maria C. Babauta; Victoria C. Babauta & Thomas Santos
Rosa C. Babauta; David C. & Nena L. Babauta
Lucia B. & Richard A. Concepcion; Vicente C. & Franny DLR. Babauta
Joaquin B. & Jenidina L. Babauta
In-Laws: Raymond S. Palacios; Francisca B. & Ramon M. Aldan
Yolanda S. Palacios & Frank S. Ada; Carmen P. Deleon Guerrero
Paul S. & Roslyn C. Palacios; Francisco M. & Elizabeth C. Iglecias
Glenda P. & Bernard A. Cabrera; Edith E. Deleon Guerrero
Glenna SP & Pete P. Reyes; Ramon M. & Brenda A. Iglecias
Lavida S. Palacios
Godparents: Rosa T. and Jesus Deleon Guerrero
Eddie Taimañao
Francisca T. & Diego C. Pinaula
Jose Ch. & Rita S. Camacho
Felis B. & Trinidad C. Kisa

Doris is additionally survived by numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and nephews, families and friends.

Mass is being offered nightly at St. Jude Parish at 6:00 p.m. immediately followed by Holy Rosary. On Tuesday, January 06, 2009, her remains will be escorted from the Commonwealth Health Center at 7:30 a.m. to Mount Carmel Cathedral. Responso Service will be at 8:00 a.m. followed by Holy Rosary. The Mass of Christian Burial will be offered at 11:00 a.m. followed by Internment Service at the Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

Your presence, thoughts and prayers are greatly appreciated.

Joseph, Jocelyn, Jodie, Joseph Jr., Jhace, and Family

Death and Funeral Announcement

ATANACIO AYUYU TAITINGFONG

Born on: September 23, 1948
Called to his eternal rest on December 26, 2008

In his new life, he now joins his:

Grand parents: Dolores Campos Taitingfong
Pedro Castro Ayuyu and Dolores Ada Ayuyu
Parents: Daniel Campos Taitingfong and Ana Ayuyu Taitingfong
Parents in-law: Anaclito Danlag and Soledad Malang
Daughter: Yvonne Lilian Taisacan Taitingfong
Son: Raymond Taisacan Taitingfong
Brothers: Jose A. Crisosotomo, Calistro A. Crisostomo, Daniel Jr.A. Taitingfong
Sister: Dolores A. Taitingfong
Sisters in-law: Lydia L. Pangelinan, Elaine Evangeline T. Teregeyo, Anshina S. Taitingfong

His memories will live in the hearts of his:

Wife: Florencia Danlag Taitingfong
Children, spouse and grand children:
Victor Daniel T. and Frances Agulto Taitingfong
(Doricyn Juanette, Victor Jr.)
Gordon Atanacio T. and Gema Pinaula Taitingfong
(Gwencyn Doreen, Glen Gordon/Vayda Aldan, Giovonni, Goddhy Gord)
Walter Clay T. and Connie King Taitingfong (Rocyn Con Yvonne, Walter Clay Jr.)
Jocelyn Sonia G. Taitingfong and John Amu K. Wabol (Athena Rose, Aries Ann)
Tanya Ann G. Taitingfong (Jatin Angelo)
Atanacio Jr. G. Taitingfong
Benjamin L. and Valencia A. Rios (Cherina, Leonnie, Aislinn, Brian, Bruce, Isa)
Daniel Gonzaga Taitingfong III
Great grand: Gordon Joe A. Taitingfong, Lenecia E. Arriola, Zurell B. Piteg

He is additionally survived by his brothers, sisters in-laws.

Jesus A. and Darlene P. Crisostomo, John N. and Aida B. Pangelinan,
Pedro A.and Dorothy Q. Taitingfong, Roman A. and Cornelia S.
Taitingfong, Juan A. and Dorothy B. Taitingfong, Lydia T. and Ramon A.
Mendiola, Joaquin A. Taitingfong and Christina Higgin, Herbert A. and
Dora S. Taitingfong, Visitacion(Vicky) T. and Jesus A. DL. Guerrero,
Antonio A. and Amor S. Taitingfong, Daniel A. and Jona(Kim) A. Taitingfong
1st wife: Cynthia Taisacan San Nicolas
2nd wife: Jocelyn(Carol) Hernandez Gonzaga

Numerous nephews, nieces, cousins, uncles and aunties

Daily mass at 6:00pm and holy rosary at 6:30pm are being offered at St. Jude Church in Koberville. On Saturday, January 03, 2009 his remains will leave CHC at 7:45am and will be escorted to Mt. Carmel Cathedral. Last respects and viewing will start at 8:30am, mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 10:30am followed by interment service at the Chalan Kanoa cemetery. Your presence, thoughts and prayers are deeply appreciated.

Thank you very much.

From wife, children and family

Atlanta inner-city school gets $365K from Oprah

ATLANTA (AP)—A letter from Oprah Winfrey last week seemed like the world's best Christmas present—until teacher Ron Clark noticed an extra piece of paper flutter out of the envelope.

That's when the Atlanta educator saw the $365,000 check for the innovative private school he opened in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods in 2007. It was, quite literally, an answer to a prayer.

"We teach school all day and fundraise at night," said Clark, who finds private donors to pay most of the $14,000 annual tuition for each student. "To have an unsolicited gift come like that is incredible."

Clark surprised his students with the news of the donation Wednesday morning in a gathering at the south Atlanta school. The children, parents and teachers erupted in deafening cheers when he showed off the check.

Several cried at the news.

"Everything they learn is enhanced because of the teachers' dedication and creativity," said a tearful Gloria Nesmith, whose son, Cameron, is a fifth-grader at the academy. "And Oprah noticed. I'm just overwhelmed."

The donation, which likely will go to scholarships for students, would pay for 26 children to attend the school for one year, Clark said. The 80-student middle school depends almost entirely on donations to operate.

In her letter to Clark, Winfrey calls him a role model and applauds the "profound difference you're making with your passion for teaching."

The check was issued by the Oprah Winfrey Foundation, which gave $4 million to educational programs in 2008, said foundation executive director Caren Yanis.

Norway: Date set for Amy Winehouse drug appeal

OSLO, Norway (AP)—British singer-songwriter Amy Winehouse has been summoned to appear in a Norwegian court on Jan. 12 in her appeal against a fine in a drugs possession case, a police prosecutor said Wednesday.

Winehouse and her husband, Blake Fielder-Civil, were arrested in the western city of Bergen in October 2007 during a concert stop on charges of possessing 7 grams (1/4-ounce) of marijuana. They were held overnight and released after paying fines of 3,000 kroner ($415) each.

The 25-year-old Winehouse later appealed the fine, claiming Norwegian police made mistakes in the case. An initial trial date in March 2008 was postponed at the request of her attorney.

Police prosecutor Rudolf Christoffersen says the star and her husband had been informed of the date by British police and will probably have to appear in person in the Bergen appeals court.

"She is the one who appealed, so that makes it her appeal," Christoffersen told The Associated Press by telephone. "Often, if you don't appear at your own appeal hearing, then the court will dismiss the appeal."

AP

In this Sunday, Aug. 17, 2008, file photo, British singer, Amy Winehouse performs at the V Festival, near Chelmsford, England.

Winehouse's Norwegian attorney, Ole Kvelstad, has said that payment of the fine amounted to a guilty plea, which he said could have serious consequences if she sought to enter the United States. Winehouse was denied a U.S. visa this year when she wanted to perform at the Grammy awards ceremony.

Actor Matt Dillon charged with speeding in Vermont

NEWBURY, Vt. (AP)—Actor Matt Dillon was charged with driving at an excessive speed for allegedly going 106 mph on an interstate highway, Vermont State Police said. Dillon, 44, of New York, was pulled over by a trooper on Interstate 91 in Newbury about 10 p.m. EST Tuesday. He was driving a rented 2009 Chevrolet Impala. The posted speed limit is 65 mph, so Dillon was charged criminally under a statute that bans going more than 30 mph above the limit while traveling 60 mph or more.

He is scheduled to appear in Vermont District Court on Jan. 21. If convicted, he could get three months in jail and be fined $300.

"We're trying to treat him no different than we would anyone else," said Sgt. Tara Thomas, a State Police spokeswoman.

Dillon's publicist, Staci Wolfe, declined comment.

AP

In this photo released by Vermont State Police, actor Matt Dillon is seen in a booking photo in Bradford, Vt., Tuesday, Dec. 30, 2008.

Dillon received a best supporting actor Oscar nomination for "Crash." His screen credits also include "There's Something About Mary," "Herbie Fully Loaded" and "The Flamingo Kid."

OBITUARY

Jamaica songwriter Ford dies; penned Marley tunes

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP)—Vincent Ford, a songwriter credited with composing the Bob Marley reggae classic "No Woman, No Cry," has died in Jamaica. He was 68. Ford died Sunday at a hospital of complications from diabetes, said Paul Kelly, a spokesman for the Kingston-based Bob Marley Foundation. The song, which appeared on Marley's 1974 "Natty Dread" album, was inspired by the Kingston ghetto of Trench Town where Marley and Ford lived in the 1960s. Ford is credited with the tune. However, some critics contend that Marley wrote it himself but gave Ford the credit to help his friend support himself with the royalties. Ford, who ran a soup kitchen and lost both his legs to diabetes, is also credited with three songs on Marley's 1976 album "Rastaman Vibration." Marley died of cancer in Miami in 1981 at age 36 and remains one of this Caribbean island's most beloved national heroes.

Bernie Hamilton, 'Starsky and Hutch' captain, dies

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Actor Bernie Hamilton, who played the no-nonsense police captain on the 1970s TV series "Starsky and Hutch," has died. He was 80. Hamilton died of cardiac arrest Tuesday night at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, said his son, Raoul Hamilton. Born in Los Angeles in 1928, Hamilton ran away from home as a teenager and wound up staying in someone's garage and attending Oakland Technical High School, where he played football and got involved in acting. Hamilton appeared in more than 20 films, including "The Young One," "The Devil at 4 O'Clock," "Synanon," "The Swimmer," "Walk the Walk" and "The Organization." He also had guest appearances on television series before becoming a regular on "Starsky and Hutch," the ABC police drama starring Paul Michael Glaser and David Soul. Hamilton played the brusque, by-the-book Capt. Harold Dobey, a role that gave him wide recognition to this day, his son said. After "Starsky and Hutch," Hamilton spent the next 20 years in the music business producing R&B and gospel records under the record label Chocolate Snowman.

Prolific mystery writer Donald Westlake dead at 75

NEW YORK (AP)—Donald Westlake, a prolific author considered one of the most successful and versatile mystery writers in the United States, has died. He was 75. Westlake collapsed from an apparent heart attack as he headed to New Year's Eve dinner while vacationing in Mexico, his wife, Abigail, told the New York Times. In a lengthy career that spanned a half-century, Westlake won three Edgar Awards, an Academy Award nomination for his screenplay "The Grifters" and the title of Grand Master from the Mystery Writers of America in 1993. His first novel, "The Mercenaries," was published by Random House in 1960. Westlake wrote more than 90 books—mostly on a typewriter. Aside from his own name, he also used several pseudonyms—including Richard Stark, Tucker Coe, Samuel Holt and Edwin West—in part because people didn't believe he could write so much so quickly. "In the beginning, people didn't want to publish more than one book a year by the same author," Susan Richman, his publicist at Grand Central Publishing, told the Times. In recent years, Westlake wrote only under his name and Richard Stark, author of a dark, spare series about a one-named sociopath called Parker. More than 15 of his books were made into movies, and he wrote a number of screenplays, including "The Grifters," which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1991. Westlake continued to write until he died. His latest novel, "Get Real," is scheduled to be released in April 2009. Donald Edwin Westlake was born July 12, 1933, in Brooklyn but was raised in Yonkers and Albany. He attended several colleges in New York but did not graduate from any of them. He married his current wife, Abigail, in 1979, and the couple made their home in Gallatin, N.Y. He is survived by his wife, four sons from his previous marriage, three stepchildren and four grandchildren.

Happy relationship threatens to go up in cigarette smoke

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My girlfriend, "Jasmine," has been seeing a therapist to deal with serious depression and anxiety issues, and I think she has done well for the most part.

I am just upset that she has taken to smoking with her co-workers to deal with stress. I don't like smoking. My mother smokes, and I find it disgusting.

I hate saying these things to Jasmine because when I do, she takes it personally. We have discussed this more than once, and she insists that my asking her to stop is "being controlling." I can't know what stress she is experiencing because of her emotional problems, but I do know that smoking isn't the solution.

I love Jasmine with all my heart, and it's devastating to me to say this, but I can't be with a smoker. Our relationship has been great, but I do not choose to spend my life in a haze of tobacco smoke. I am in college and every day I see kids my age outside freezing their butts off for a smoke because it isn't allowed inside.

Please help me, Abby. This is something I can't compromise on. It's enough that I already have one person close to me who smokes—I don't need another.

ANTI-SMOKER IN MICHIGAN

DEAR ANTI-SMOKER: The fellow students you see freezing their butts off for a smoke aren't doing it because they like it. They are freezing their butts off because they're addicted to nicotine, need their fix and are willing to get it in sub-zero weather if they must.

People who reach for a cigarette when they are feeling stressed regard the cigarette as a "friend" they can hold onto. What they don't realize is the cigarette is holding onto THEM -- and occasional smokers become dependent not only on the ritual but also the "drug."

You have a hard choice to make, and so does Jasmine. Perhaps it will be easier if Jasmine does the choosing. Tell her that if you smell tobacco on her hair, skin, breath or clothing, you won't kiss her. If she hasn't quit smoking within 30 days, you'll have your answer.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband, kids and I fly to the West Coast once a year for either summer vacation or the holidays. As soon as we arrive, my in-laws take me—"the wife"—to the grocery store to shop for food and expect me to pay half the bill.

Abby, my in-laws are not hurting for money, and I have never understood this bizarre custom. I don't appreciate getting off a long plane flight to go grocery shopping and incur yet another expense after paying for air travel, etc. I wouldn't dream of doing it to them. Everything is always taken care of before they come to visit us.

Would you consider this poor hospitality on their part, or a difference in cultures—East Coast formal versus West Coast casual? I am trying to let it go, but it is getting old.

DREADING NEXT TIME, HAMPTON, VA.

DEAR DREADING: What you have described is not a difference in cultures. Your in-laws may not be hurting for money, but they may be on a budget. Because being taken to the grocery store and asked to pay for half the groceries bothers you, on your next visit have them take their son along so he can have the pleasure. You can't change his parents, so don't let it ruin your visit.

■■■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

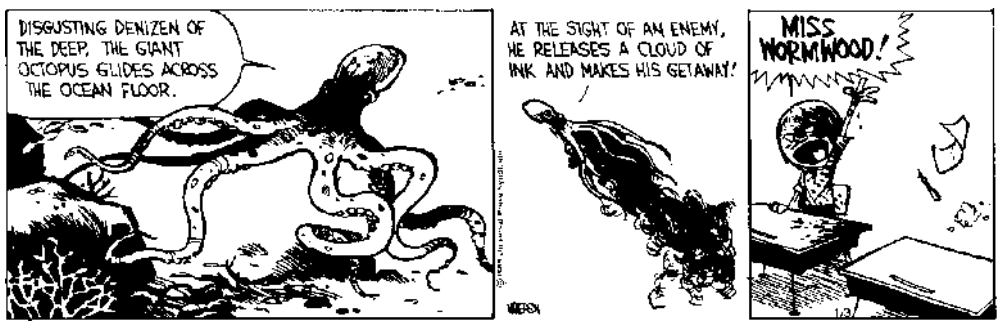
■■■

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

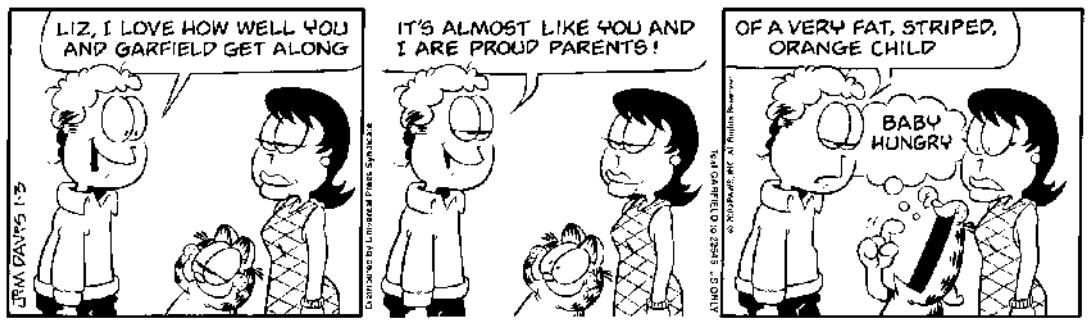
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


DISGUSTING DENIZEN OF THE DEEP, THE GIANT OCTOPUS GLIDES ACROSS THE OCEAN FLOOR.
AT THE SIGHT OF AN ENEMY, HE RELEASES A CLOUD OF INK AND MAKES HIS GETAWAY!
MISS WORMWOOD!

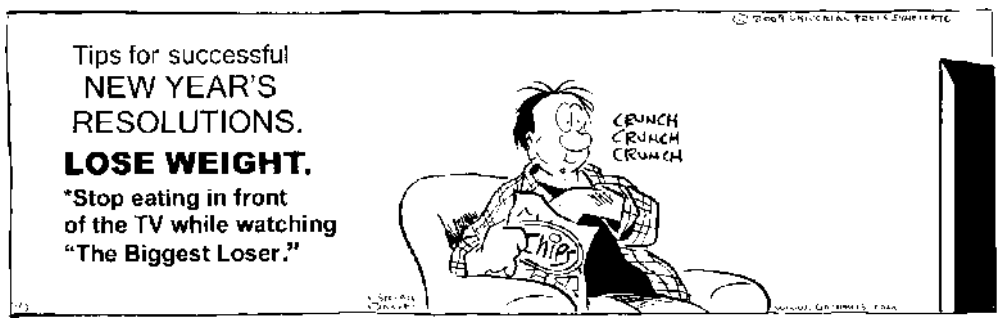
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


LIZ, I LOVE HOW WELL YOU AND GARFIELD GET ALONG
IT'S ALMOST LIKE YOU AND I ARE PROUD PARENTS!
OF A VERY FAT, STRIPED, ORANGE CHILD
BABY HUNGRY

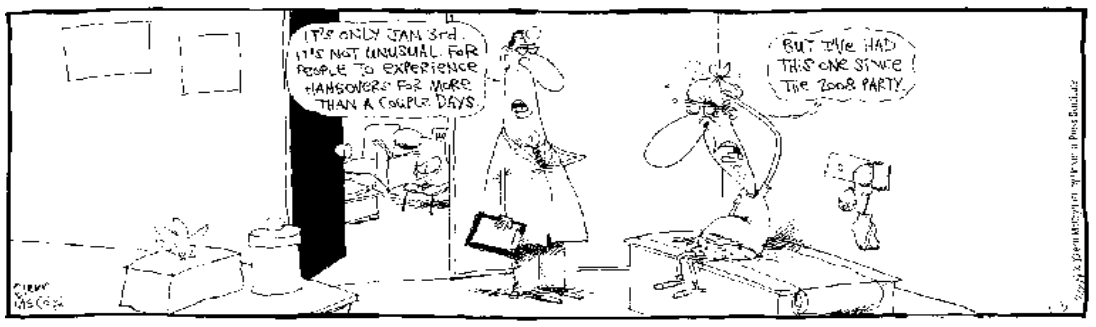
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


Tips for successful NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS.
LOSE WEIGHT.
*Stop eating in front of the TV while watching "The Biggest Loser."
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
Chips

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


IT'S ONLY JAN 3rd. IT'S NOT UNUSUAL FOR PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE HANGOVERS FOR MORE THAN A COUPLE DAYS
BUT I'VE HAD THIS ONE SINCE THE 2008 PARTY.

CROSSWORD

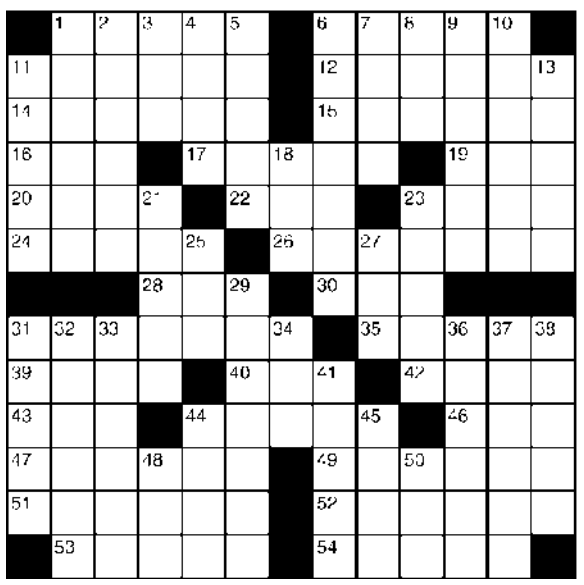
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Across (Pref.)
6 Aspect
11 Contemporary
12 Site
14 One-celled critter
15 Aviatrix Earhart
16 Ref
17 Hogs
19 "... Superman!"
20 Told stories
22 Junior
23 Dandling site
24 Nairobi's land
26 Novelty
28 Detergent brand
30 Anonymous Richard
31 With chicness
35 Vote into office
39 Has a bug
40 Mis' neighbors
42 Humdinger
43 Econ. statistic
44 Yawl-like vessel
46 Scooted
47 Gum arabic
49 Illinois city
51 Brief time
52 Window accessories
53 Pop
54 Winter forecast

DOWN
1 Centerfield legend Agee
2 Go back into business
3 Rd.
4 Apprehends
5 Cabbage recipes
6 Architect, e.g.
7 Base-runner's goal
8 Blackjack component
9 Contact lens cleaner
10 Picas' alternatives
11 Seal a crack
13 Relaxes
18 Charged bit
21 Color workers
23 Ring ominously
25 Illustrations
27 Reason to say "Alas!"
29 "So soon?"
31 Elaborate tales
32 Chopped finely
33 Llama's cousin
34 Nevertheless
36 One side of the Urals
37 Red Bordeaux
38 Albacore and yellowfin
41 Oodles
44 Benevolent
45 Throw hard
48 Massachusetts cape
50 "Norma —"

Solution time: 27 mins.

Yesterday's answer 1-3



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alex D. Linz, 20; Danica McKellar, 34; Mel Gibson, 53; Stephen Stills, 64

Happy Birthday: You'll be tempted to take on things that you should probably take a pass on this year. Don't let your heart rule your head. There are far better options. Don't let your ego and emotional factors get involved in the decisions you have to make. Your numbers are 5, 13, 16, 21, 25, 32, 48

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Sudden, unexpected changes will take you by surprise, so make whatever occurs work for you. By using what you have and not trying to manufacture something new, you will save financially, emotionally and professionally. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Get things straight the first time around and spare yourself a lot of aggravation. Covering your back by diversifying will be your best bet. Travel or make a geographical move if it will lead to a better or more profitable position. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't give in to someone trying to take advantage of you. Use your own ideas. New opportunities are heading your way. Change jobs or enlist with a headhunter so you are in the running for a better position. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Your anger will mount due to emotional conversations that are a no-win venture. Back away and show your restraint and professionalism. You can make a far greater impression by refusing to take part in a senseless dispute. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Don't be afraid to step into the spotlight and say what you think. You will grab the attention of someone who has plenty to offer someone like you. Be honest about what it will take to get you on board and working on a new project. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Don't be afraid to contribute your opinions. If you say nothing, you will not have the option to complain if things don't turn out as you want. Take care of emotional matters at home before they escalate. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Reevaluate your position and consider making a leap to a more lucrative field. You will find an angle that will make your future look brighter and more satisfying if you network with people in an industry that interests you. Don't let negativity at home stand in your way. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): You will have plenty to think about if you want to salvage what you have and move on. There will be debts to deal with, so put pride aside and talk to those who can help you out. An emotional matter will give you the strength and courage you need. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Your ideas may be a little far-fetched but that's precisely how you will attract someone entrepreneurial enough to see what you have to offer as a viable challenge. Travel will be conducive to romance. ✪✪✪✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Refrain from giving handouts or trusting anyone who is trying to appeal to your emotional side. Treat any financial deal professionally. Lending or borrowing is not likely to turn out in your favor. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Give your assessment of your personal situation to the people involved in your life and you will get respect and the support you need. Change will be difficult but necessary. Be passionate about the way you feel. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You may question what you are going to do next. You have to be practical and perhaps support your desire to help a cause by doing what you do best and returning to the industry you are most familiar with. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are stubborn and a bit of a reactionary but you get things done. You are inventive, entertaining, have an open mind and are a trendsetter.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	5	9			2	6		
6								8
			4		3			
		4			3			
			1	8	7			
		8			1			
			2		9			
2								7
	7	5			8	9		

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 1/03

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

1	6	7	8	4	5	9	2	3
4	2	5	6	9	3	1	8	7
3	9	8	1	2	7	4	5	6
8	4	6	9	3	2	5	7	1
5	3	9	7	1	4	8	6	2
2	7	1	5	8	6	3	9	4
6	5	3	4	7	9	2	1	8
7	1	2	3	5	8	6	4	9
9	8	4	2	6	1	7	3	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

FIRST DAY OF COLLEGE Solution: 9 letters

I	R	F	H	A	L	L	C	R	M	Y	E	G	E	E
N	M	O	R	O	E	C	U	O	L	P	R	T	A	A
T	E	P	S	A	M	O	D	B	M	O	A	A	A	R
I	E	T	R	S	T	E	M	S	U	M	O	N	E	L
M	T	N	Y	E	E	E	W	P	M	S	U	H	I	Y
I	I	O	S	R	S	T	R	O	T	R	(K)	T	C	C
D	N	T	F	S	A	S	O	N	R	V	(O)	A	E	S
A	G	E	A	L	A	R	I	R	I	K	(O)	D	L	T
T	F	S	F	G	A	L	B	O	P	T	(B)	M	U	N
E	A	R	N	T	S	N	C	I	N	E	Y	I	D	E
S	I	O	I	U	T	T	R	Y	I	R	T	S	F	D
R	L	A	P	E	E	R	S	U	S	I	T	S	H	U
U	W	M	I	T	N	E	R	V	O	U	S	I	C	T
O	A	T	T	E	N	D	A	N	D	J	B	O	S	S
C	O	M	M	U	N	I	T	Y	E	L	G	N	U	J

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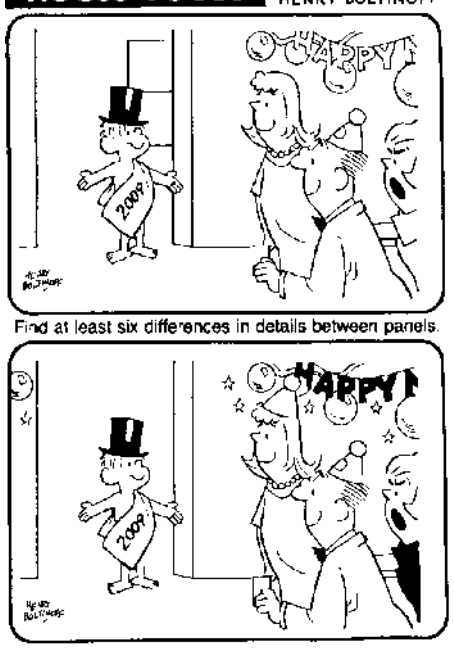
Admission, Assembly, Attend, Book, Busy, Campus, Class, Community, Commute, Course, Dorms, Early, Fall, Fraternity, Freedom, Friend, Group, Hall, Homework, Impression, Intimidate, Journal, Jungle, Late, Learn, Library, Lines, Long, Lost, Meeting, Move, Nervous, Notes, Panic, Peers, Professor, Rent, Roommate, Schedule, School, Students, Study, Tour, Tuition, Wait, Year

Yesterday's Answer: Whines

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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Differences: 1. Woman's shirt is black. 2. Stars added to wall. 3. Woman is wearing hat. 4. Letters are black. 5. Window is missing. 6. Decorations added to wall on left.

Wishing Well®

5	2	8	3	7	8	5	7	8	7	3	8	5
D	B	C	A	N	E	O	O	L	M	B	E	C
3	8	5	4	8	2	4	7	6	4	2	4	3
E	B	U	B	R	E	E	O	U	F	Y	L	A
6	5	7	3	5	2	8	6	8	3	4	7	4
N	M	R	M	E	O	A	E	T	I	E	E	X
6	8	4	5	7	4	8	7	5	6	2	7	2
X	F	I	N	T	B	I	F	T	P	U	A	R
3	8	4	6	5	7	8	4	2	5	2	5	2
N	I	L	E	I	R	V	E	S	N	E	T	L
6	5	8	7	3	6	2	3	5	8	3	6	5
C	H	I	S	G	T	F	S	E	N	M	E	M
8	5	6	3	5	6	5	6	3	6	3	6	6
G	A	D	I	I	H	L	O	L	N	E	O	R

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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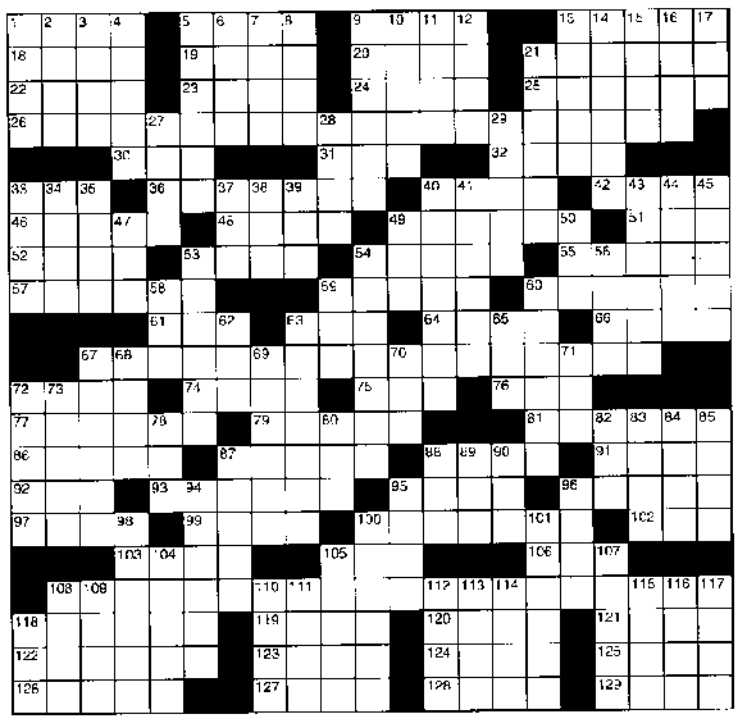
Super Crossword

PRESENT DANGER

ACROSS
1 Singer Horne
5 Gusto
9 Complain
13 Helium and hydrogen
18 Israeli airline
19 Cultural gro.
20 "Picnic" playwright
21 Actress Baddeley
22 Strauss' "— sprach Zarathustra"
23 "Chacun a son —"
24 Lassie's father
25 Dive Jessye
26 Start of a remark by Milton Berle
30 Iver —
31 Center of gravity?
32 — Pea (Popeye's kid)
33 Health resort
36 Swore off
40 "Little Man —" ('91 film)
42 Mock
45 Polished the Pontiac
46 B&B's Johnny
49 Harsh
51 Latin I word
52 Help in a heist
53 Baseball's Nolan
54 Hiawatha's transport
55 Very cold
57 King's quarters
59 Brilliant bird
60 Common antiseptic
61 Prone
63 Shepard or Snead
64 Poet in the past
66 Pastille
67 Middle of remark
72 Writer Paretsky
74 Memo start
75 Brenda or Brandon
76 Goo
77 Speaker
79 Singer Neville
81 "Barry —" (75 film)
86 Defamation
87 Shoelace part
88 Charity
91 French airport
92 "Unaccustomed — am . . ."
93 Storage sites
95 Burn remedy
96 Steep rocks
97 Cur up with Cather
99 Ho Chi —
100 Mobile home?
102 Dogpatch's Daisy
103 Famous fellow?
105 Scrape by, with "out"
106 Stout relative
108 End of remark
118 "Peter Pan" extra
119 Come Sail
120 Season or Canal
121 Circus sound
122 Put on
123 Disoriented
124 Run in neutral
125 — Taft Benson
126 Stereo component
127 Trawler gear
128 Tumbled
129 TV's "— the Press"

DOWN
1 Page
2 Raines or Wilcox
3 "Boss" Tweed's nemesis
4 Hilo hello
5 Croatian capital
6 Slaughter or Cabell
7 Lobe probe?
8 "Cheerio!"
9 Acted for
10 In reserve
11 Taj town
12 — -de-wee
13 Lawn ornament
14 Comes to terms
15 Big rig
16 Jack of "The Lone Ranger"
17 — Bernardino, CA
21 Response
27 "Heavens to Betsy!"
28 Montand or Tanguy
29 Cosmetician Arden
33 Trade
34 Sunscreen ingredient
35 Lipinski leap
37 Happiness
38 Actress Hagen
39 — Tin Tin
40 Logical
41 Declaration
43 Rock salt
44 — acid
45 "Transmit by bytes"
47 LAX letters
49 Cul-de-sac
50 Freud topic
53 Mend
54 Lerner & Loewe musical
56 Dutch export
58 Roller-coaster unit
59 — -jongg
60 Perfect examples
62 — bar
63 Furtiveness
65 Mil. group
67 Sheik spot
68 Destiny
69 Siegfried's sword
70 Itch
71 Strive
72 — plexus
73 Greet Eos
78 Vintage
80 Musical syllables
82 Postman's Creed word
83 Woe serving
84 "Eugene Onegin" character
85 AMEX riva
87 Simian
88 Menu phrase
89 Tennis stroke
90 "— culpa"
94 Hammed up "Hamlet"
95 Pianist Templeton
96 Baby bovine
98 Mar
100 Powerful pooches
101 Maestro Lorin
104 39.37 inches
105 Snowy bird
107 — Zimbalist, Jr.
108 In (archaeology term)
109 Mediterranean port
110 "No Way Out" actress
111 Scenter of your face?
112 Like
113 Bare
114 Swiss sharpshooter
115 Leap
116 Seldom seen
117 "Confound it!"
118 Oregon hrs.



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Trivia test

by Bill Rodriguez

1. ASTRONOMY: What do the Van Allen belts refer to?
2. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What kind of animal could be described as ursine?
3. LANGUAGE: What does the British slang "arrows" refer to?
4. FAMOUS QUOTES: Who once said, "Human beings are the only creatures on earth that allow their children to come back home"?
5. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What Mexican revolutionary's real name was Doroteo Arango?
6. FOOD & DRINK: What is the spice that gives curry powder its yellow color?
7. ADVERTISING: What peanut butter brand was the "No. 1 choice of choosy moms"?
8. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Presidential candidate George McGovern carried only one state in the 1972 election. What was it?
9. GEOGRAPHY: What is the largest man-made lake in the U.S.?
10. PSYCHOLOGY: What kind of fear causes phasmophobia?

Answers

1. Radiation belts surrounding the Earth
2. Bears
3. The game of darts and the darts themselves
4. Bill Cosby
5. Pancho Villa
6. Turmeric
7. Jif
8. Massachusetts
9. Lake Mead, created by the Hoover Dam
10. Fear of ghosts

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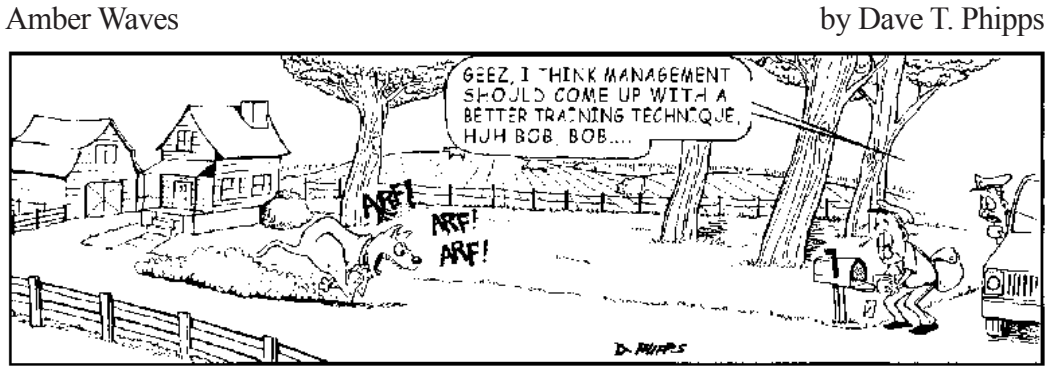
Saturday's Answers

Popeye

POPEYE
Hey Eugene!
MY LOVE LIFE IS A REAL BUMMER!
NOT AS BAD AS ROMEO AND JULIET.
WHO IS DEM?
FAMOUS LOVERS WHO LIVED MANY YEARS AGO...
...SHAKESPEARE WROTE ABOUT THEM...
THEIR FAMILIES TRIED TO KEEP THEM APART...
...IN THE END THEY BOTH DIED...
OH YEAH! I HEARD ABOUT DEM!
IN ONE SCENE HE GITS LOST AN' SHE YELLS...
ROMEO ROMEO WHERE TH'@#$% IS YA?
AIN'T I RIGHT?
CLOSE ENOUGH
YA DIN'T THINK I KNEW DAT SPEECH, DIDJA?
YOU ALWAYS MANAGE TO SURPRISE ME!
Hey Eugene!

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

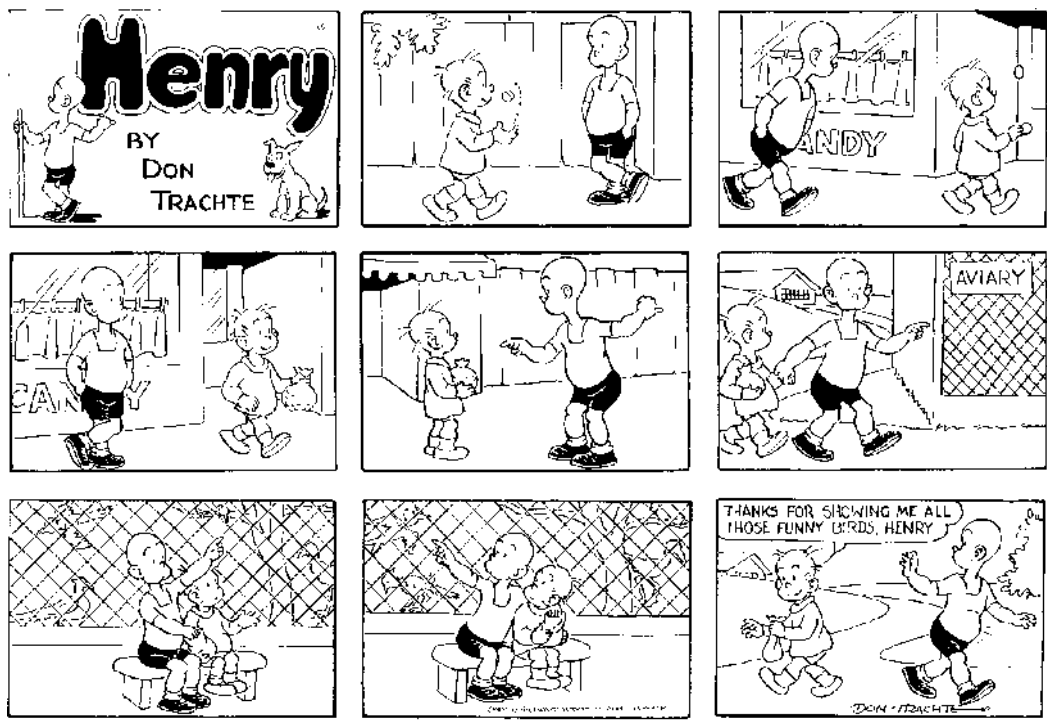
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I WAS VERY HANDSOME
IN FACT, WOMEN USED TO CHASE ME DOWN THE STREET.
YEP.. I WAS THE BEST LOOKING PURSE SNATCHER IN TOWN!

Mark Trail

MARK TRAIL
WE SHOULD ALL REFLECT ON HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE TO LIVE IN SUCH A GREAT COUNTRY!
WE ONLY HAVE TO GO OUTDOORS TO RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST GIFTS-THE NATURAL WORLD!
GOD BLESS AMERICA, LAND THAT WE LOVE
LET'S HOPE THAT 2009 WILL BRING PEACE AND HAPPINESS...
AND THAT WE WILL DO OUR SHARE IN PRESERVING WHAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN
GOD BLESS AMERICA, OUR HOME SWEET HOME
LET'S ALL WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR COUNTRY A BETTER AND MORE SECURE PLACE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
Hank Ellwood

Henry

BY DON TRACHTE



CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIEDS RATES AND POLICIES

Saipan Tribune's Classifieds Section gives you the right exposure without hurting your pockets. Stretch your dollar and get results.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 7-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as $25 per 3 liner ad for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of below packages that fits your budget.

	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	**$25**
• 5-Liner	**$35**
• 3-Liner with picture	**$45**
• 5-Liner with picture	**$55**

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

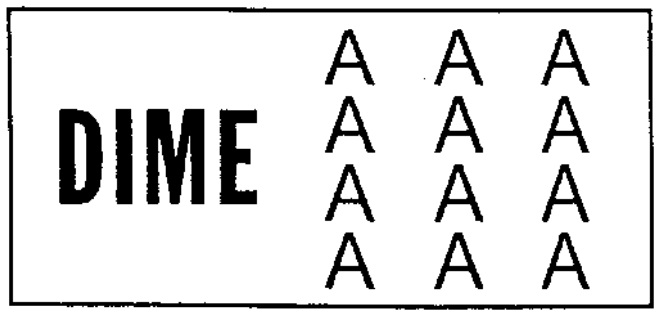
Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

WHATZIT?™

Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.



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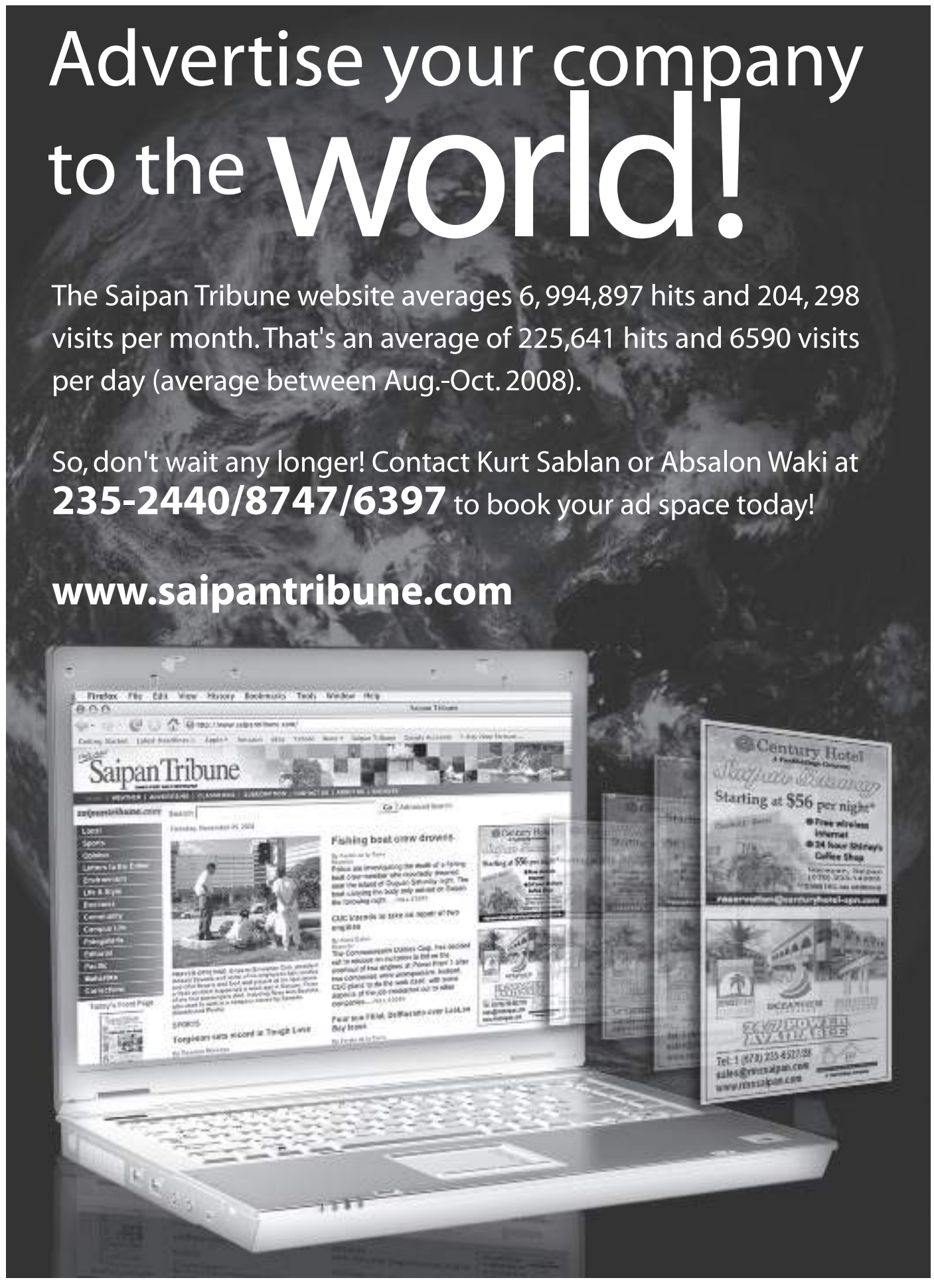
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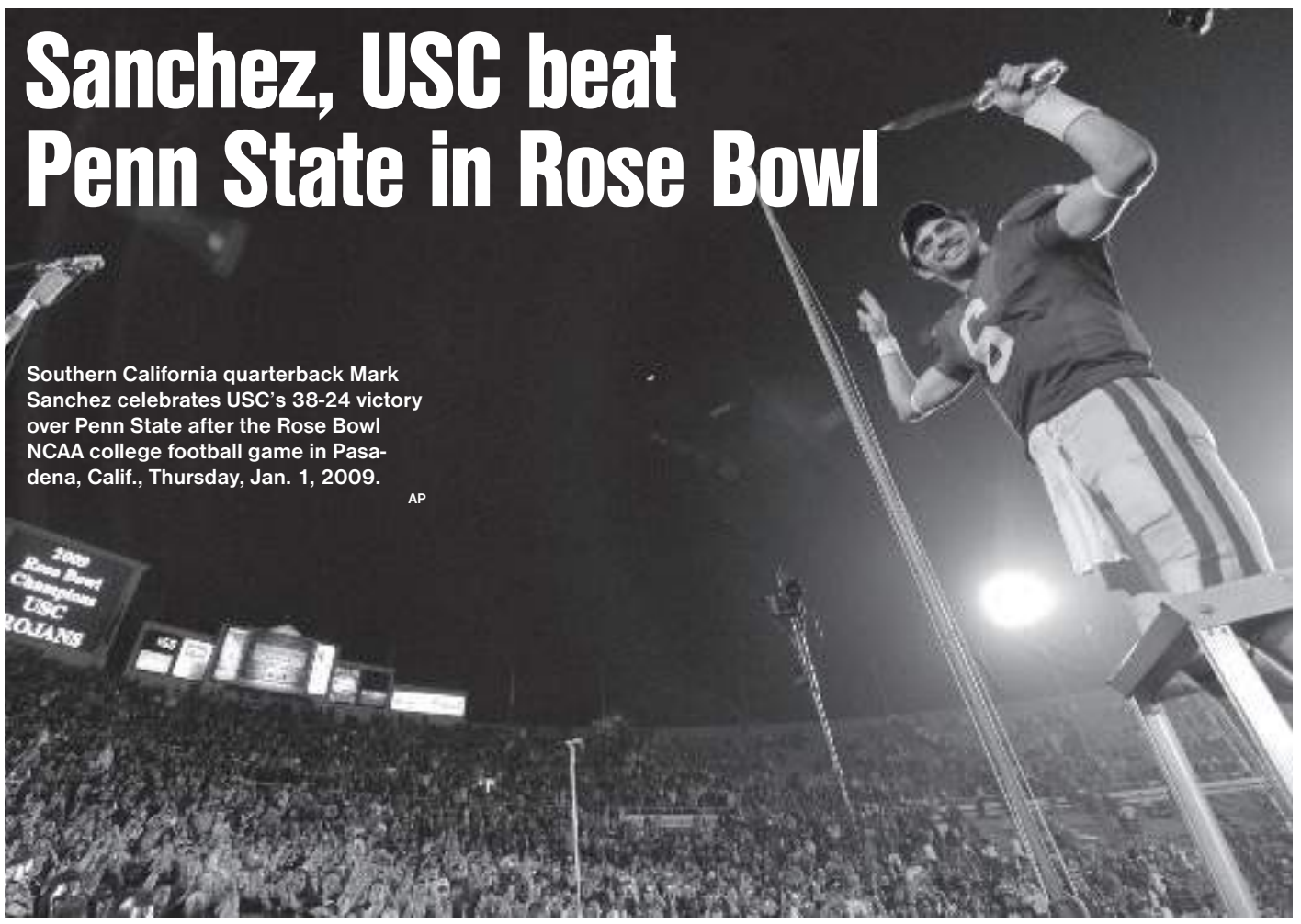
Sanchez, USC beat Penn State in Rose Bowl



Southern California quarterback Mark Sanchez celebrates USC's 38-24 victory over Penn State after the Rose Bowl NCAA college football game in Pasadena, Calif., Thursday, Jan. 1, 2009. AP

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Southern California made a strong case of its own to be No. 1.

JoePa certainly recognized what a talented team the Trojans were—and that was before they beat up Penn State in the Rose Bowl.

Mark Sanchez passed for 413 yards and four touchdowns, USC dominated on defense and the fifth-ranked Trojans defeated the No. 6 Nittany Lions 38-24 Thursday.

Penn State coach Joe Paterno watched from the press box, where he's been for most of the season because of hip problems. He couldn't have liked what he saw - at one point in the first half, the TV camera caught him shaking his head as USC (12-1) rolled to a 31-7 lead.

Out of the BCS championship mix, the Trojans could only wonder what might have been had they not lost at Oregon State 27-21 on Sept. 25.

What was thought to be a weak Pac-10 hurt the Trojans' chances to reach the national championship game in Miami—where Florida and Oklahoma will play next week. But the Pac-10 finished the postseason 5-0.

"With all due respect, those are two great programs, I don't think anybody can beat the Trojans," USC coach Pete Carroll said. "I just think we can beat anyone we played. That's happened a lot to us late in the season. This is a terrific finishing program. There are so many things we can do. We're just hard to beat right now.

"I just wish we could keep playing. Unfortunately, we don't get to. Maybe someday there will be a chance, but not now."

And not soon, either. There's no playoff in sight for major college football.

USC scored four touchdowns and a field goal on five consecutive first-half possessions for its 24-point halftime lead against a team that allowed only 12.4 points per game during the regular season.

With the No. 1 defense in the nation, there was no way the Trojans would blow that kind of lead.

The Trojans' 31 first-half points were the most they've scored in any of their record 33 Rose Bowl games. They spent most of the second half working the clock while their defense held Penn State in check until the fourth quarter.

"The offense was on fire in the first half," Carroll said. "I thought Mark just set the tempo, (wide receiver) Damian Williams came through and the whole line really protected well so we had a chance to really get moving on these guys. We just kept firing on all cylinders, the defense kept giving them the ball back, and the guys just took advantage of it."

The Nittany Lions (11-2) scored 17 points in the fourth quarter to make the final score respectable, but fell far short of their 40.2-point average.

"I don't want to take anything away from Southern Cal, because they played a heck of a football game and their quarterback played a great game," Paterno said. "They certainly deserved to win it, but I'm a little disappointed that we weren't a little bit more competitive. And a lot of that was because we made so many mistakes in the first half."

USC finished with 27 first downs and 474 yards of total offense. Penn State gained 410 yards, almost twice the average the Trojans allowed during the regular season. But it hardly mattered.

Paterno, whose won 383 games, including 23 bowls—both records—said several times in the days leading up to the Rose Bowl that he thought USC was at least as good as any team in the country, perhaps better.

Clearly, the 82-year-old coach knew what he was talking about. The Trojans won 10 straight after losing to Oregon State, outscoring the opposition 380-80.

"I thought that we were playing against the best and I thought we had to play our best to be competitive," Paterno said. "In the first half, we just did the dumb things that we have not done all year. We didn't play our game in the first half, but we came back and we hung in there. So we have nothing to be ashamed of."

The Nittany Lions committed three turnovers and nine penalties for 72 yards.

Sanchez, who completed 28-of-35 passes without being intercepted and finished the season with 3,207 passing yards and 34 touchdown throws, might have played his final game for USC. The strong-armed junior has said he will consider making himself available for the NFL draft. The deadline is Jan. 15.

Sanchez became the third player to pass for more than 400 yards in the Rose Bowl.

Afterward, many in the crowd of 93,293 chanted: "One more year, one more year" to Sanchez.

"That was special," he said.

"We'll go through it and really take our time doing it," Carroll said. "This should not be an emotional decision."

Williams caught a career-high 10 passes for 162 yards and a touchdown and Ronald Johnson caught two TD passes.

Penn State's Daryll Clark completed 21-of-36 passes for 273 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions. Evan Royster, who averaged 6.5 yards per carry in gaining 1,202 yards during the regular season, came out with an injured left knee in the first quarter after picking up 34 yards on six carries.

Carroll's Trojans have won seven straight conference championships and played in seven consecutive BCS bowls—both records. They're 6-1 in big games—5-0 against Big Ten teams such as Penn State—and 82-9 since Carroll's second year on the job, 2002.

They've also won 11 or more games in seven straight seasons—another record.

The Trojans have played in a record-tying four straight Rose Bowls, winning three straight since losing to Texas 41-38 with the national title on the line.

Sanchez was the offensive player of the game and Kaluka Maiava was the top defensive player, becoming the third straight USC linebacker to win that award, following Brian Cushing and Rey Maualuga.

It became clear in the first quarter that Penn State's usually dominant defense was vulnerable.

Sanchez threw a 27-yard scoring pass to Williams, capping an 86-yard drive that appeared to be short-circuited early on when Aaron Maybin sacked Sanchez and forced a fumble that Ollie Ogbu recovered at the USC 34. But Maybin, who had 12 sacks during the regular season, was offside.

The Nittany Lions, who were 9 1/2-point underdogs, tied it on a 9-yard run by Clark, capping an 80-yard, nine-play drive.

Maybe the Big Ten would finally hang in there against USC.

Nope.

Sanchez scored on a 6-yard quarterback draw, completing an 80-yard drive that put USC on top for good.

David Buehler's 30-yard field goal made it 17-7, and Sanchez threw scoring passes of 19 yards to Johnson and 20 yards to C.J. Gable in a 48-second span late in the second period for USC's 24-point halftime lead.

Clark threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Derrick Williams early in the fourth quarter, capping an 80-yard drive and trimming USC's lead to 31-14. The Trojans wasted no time in answering, going 82 yards on three plays, the last one a 45-yard scoring pass from Sanchez to a wide-open Johnson with 12:02 left.

If there was going to be any drama on a typically clear and mild evening in Pasadena, that ended it.

CAPITAL ONE BOWL
No. 16 Georgia 24, No. 19 Michigan State 12

At Orlando, Florida, Matthew Stafford threw three touchdown passes in the second half to lead No. 16 Georgia over No. 19 Michigan State 24-12 in college football's Capital One Bowl on Thursday.

Ranked No. 1 early this season, Georgia gave coach Mark Richt his sixth bowl win in eight tries.

Stafford was just 6-for-14 and an interception in the first half. After that, he looked more like the quarterback that NFL teams covet—if he decides to pass up his senior season—in going 14-for-17 and the three scores in a span of 18 minutes.

The expected showdown between star running backs Javon Ringer and Georgia's Knowshown Moreno never materialized. Moreno ran for 62 yards on 23 carries; Ringer had 47 yards and a touchdown on 20 carries.

OUTBACK BOWL
Iowa 31, South Carolina 10

At Tampa, Florida, All-American running back Shonn Greene ran for 121 yards and three touchdowns in leading Iowa to victory then declared he'll skip his senior season and enter the NFL draft.

He rushed for more than 100 yards in all 13 of Iowa's games and scored in all but one. Greene finished with school single-season records of 1,850 yards and 20 touchdowns, after sitting out the 2007 season because of academic problems.

Greene scored on a pair of 1-yard runs to help build a 21-0 halftime lead, then added an 11-yarder to make it 31-0 late in the third quarter.

GATOR BOWL
Nebraska 26, Clemson 21

At Jacksonville, Florida, Joe Ganz threw for two touchdowns and Alex Henery kicked four field goals as Nebraska ended the season with a four-game winning streak and won a January bowl game for the first time in nine years.

It capped quite a turnaround for the Cornhuskers, who hired Bo Pelini to replace fired coach Bill Callahan after missing the postseason in 2007.

New Clemson coach Dabo Swinney, who took over on Oct. 13, looked like he would get a win in his first bowl game. The Tigers led 14-3 at halftime and were making all sorts of defensive plays, but the Cornhuskers dominated the second half.

SUN BOWL
Oregon State 3, Pitt 0

At El Paso, Texas, in the lowest-scoring major bowl game in a half-century, No. 24 Oregon State beat No. 18 Pittsburgh 3-0 in the Sun Bowl on Justin Kahut's 44-yard field goal late in the first half Wednesday.

The defensive struggle included 20 punts and 10 sacks. Pitt kicker Connor Lee tried a 58-yard field goal in the closing minutes but the ball, helped by a steady wind, dropped just short of the crossbar.

CHICK-FIL-A BOWL
LSU 38, No. 14 Georgia Tech 3

At Atlanta, Charles Scott ran for three touchdowns and LSU took advantage of Georgia Tech's special teams mistakes in a surprisingly easy victory.

LSU outscored the No. 14 Yellow Jackets 28-0 in the second quarter and led 35-3 at halftime. Scott, who had 65 yards rushing, had two touchdowns in the decisive quarter.

A year after winning the national championship, LSU (8-5) lost three of its last four regular-season games but regrouped for its dominant bowl victory.

MUSIC CITY BOWL
Vanderbilt 16, Boston College 14

At Nashville, Tennessee, Vanderbilt won a bowl game for the first time in exactly 53 years, beating Boston College on Bryant Hahnfeldt's 45-yard field goal with 3:26 left.

Vanderbilt hadn't even played in a bowl since 1982 and the win gave the Commodores (7-6) their first winning season since then, too.

INSIGHT BOWL
Kansas 42, Minnesota 21

At Tempe, Arizona, Dezmon Briscoe caught a game-record 14 passes for 201 yards and three touchdowns, and Todd Reesing threw for four scores for Kansas.

Reesing completed 27 of 35 passes, hitting on a school-record 14 straight passes in the first half. He threw for 313 yards and improved to 20-6 as a starter.

Kerry Meier caught one touchdown pass and threw another for the Jayhawks (8-5), who have won three straight bowl games for the first time.

ARMED FORCES BOWL
Houston 34, Air Force 28

At Fort Worth, Texas, Case Keenum ran for two touchdowns and threw for another score and Houston (8-5) wrapped up coach Kevin Sumlin's first season by beating Air Force (8-5) for its first bowl victory since 1980.

Houston ended an eight-game bowl losing streak, avoiding a record the Cougars didn't want to share with Notre Dame. The Irish won the Hawaii Bowl last week to end an college NCAA-record bowl losing streak at nine.

Broncos: great offense but a mess on defense

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—Mike Shanahan's successor in Denver will inherit an explosive offense that might be one healthy running back away from greatness. He'll also take over a dreadful defense that needs yet another overhaul.

Shanahan's 14-year tenure as Broncos coach ended with the franchise mired in mediocrity: a 24-24 record over the last three seasons, largely the result of too many personnel mistakes and decrepit drafts that failed to stock the defense.

Despite losing an astonishing seven tailbacks to injured reserve in 2008, the Broncos' offense, led by young stars Jay Cutler, Brandon Marshall, Ryan Clady and Tony Scheffler, ranked second in the NFL in yardage as Cutler set several franchise passing records in his third pro season.

The defense, on the other hand, ranked 29th, allowed an NFL-high 448 points and managed a measly 13 takeaways under Bob Slowik, Denver's third defensive boss in three years.

The first two candidates who will interview for the Broncos' coaching vacancy are New York Giants defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo and Tampa Bay Buccaneers secondary coach Raheem Morris, team spokesman Patrick Smyth said Thursday. The Broncos expect to speak with Spagnuolo on Saturday and Morris on Monday.

When Shanahan and Bowlen held tearful back-to-back news conferences on New Year's Eve to talk about their divorce, both spoke proudly of the Broncos' high-octane offense and its bright future. They also spoke of Denver's desperate need to refurbish a defense that's been the franchise's Achilles' heel for way too long.

AP

Mike Shanahan talks about his firing from the head coaching job of the Denver Broncos football team during a news conference at the team's headquarters in Denver on Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2008.

"I don't want to put any pressure on the new head coach, but if you take a look at the offense, the youth, the talent ..." Shanahan gushed. "Defensively, we lost a couple of our captains this year (in Champ Bailey and D.J. Williams). They'll be back. We get some guys that were out, they will be back. Through free agency and the draft, people want to be a Denver Bronco. This is the best organization in sports."

The Broncos' new boss will need to get right to work addressing needs along the defensive line, at linebacker and in the secondary.

He doesn't need to tinker with the offense at all, unless he feels that Ryan Torain (knee) and Peyton Hillis (hamstring) might not return to full health in 2009.

Shanahan said the team's offense will soon put the Broncos in the hunt for another championship. But if 2008 proved anything, it's that without a solid defense and a decent running game, Cutler can't shoulder the burden by himself, no matter his immense talents and strong right arm.

Only five players from his 2001-05 drafts remain on the roster, and two from the four-man draft of 2007, defensive linemen Jarvis Moss and Tim Crowder, were inactive more often than not this season. The list of unproductive free agents is nearly as long as the list of draft busts.

Bowlen seemed a little bit fuzzy on how to move forward. He said he didn't want to give his next coach total control of football operations the way he did Shanahan.

"I don't anticipate the next coach will have both jobs," Bowlen said.

And Bowlen said he wanted to focus on hiring a coach, then a general manager. That unconventional approach could eliminate some potential candidates such as Scott Pioli, Bill Cowher or Bill Parcells from front office consideration because they would presumably want a say in hiring the coach.

Bowlen said the current front office trio of Jim Goodman, Brian Xanders and Jeff Goodman would stay in place. Although Jim Goodman is the vice president of football operations and player personnel, Bowlen wouldn't call him a general manager.

Bowlen said he'll consult with chief operating officer Joe Ellis in selecting the next head coach. The owner also said most of Shanahan's assistants will be fired, although they'll be considered on a coach-by-coach basis.

Cutler wants quarterbacks coach Jeremy Bates to stick around. He just signed a contract extension and has a budding relationship with the third-year pro who earned his first Pro Bowl nod this season.

Keeping Bates would soothe Cutler, who publicly criticized Bowlen's firing of Shanahan. Bowlen said he would keep Cutler in the loop on the coaching search out of respect for his star.

"I talked to Jay Cutler, and Jay understood ... I didn't get any negative feedback," Bowlen said. "I think he understands enough about the business of football, the game of football, that there are going to be coaching changes and changes in organizations. I didn't sense that Jay had any negative feelings about it, and I'm sure he is very interested in who is going to be the next head coach. Obviously, he is 'The Man' around here now, so I will be talking with Jay."

Magic back to best, cruise past Bulls

CHICAGO (AP)—The Orlando Magic quickly bounced back to its best with a 113-94 win over the Chicago Bulls on Wednesday, posting its eighth win in nine NBA games.

Having seen its seven-game winning streak end at Detroit on Monday, the Magic were on top of the Bulls early and went on to record a win that stretched its lead in the Southeast Division to 3-1/2 games.

Rashard Lewis set the tone by scoring 16 of his 21 points in the first half.

Chicago shot just 42 percent.

Rockets 85, Bucks 81

In Houston, the home team notched its eighth successive win over Milwaukee.

Yao Ming had 22 points and 10 rebounds to lead the way for the Rockets, who responded to an embarrassing loss at lowly Washington on Monday.

The Bucks have lost nine consecutive games in Houston.

Pistons 83, Nets 75

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, an undermanned Detroit prevailed over New Jersey in a defensive struggle.

Allen Iverson scored 19 points to top the points for the Pistons, who won a fifth straight game.

Both teams lost key players during the game. New Jersey's Vince Carter was ejected for arguing a second-quarter call and Rasheed Wallace sat out the second half with a foot injury.

Detroit's Richard Hamilton (groin) missed his third straight game, and Antonio McDyess sat out after injuring his ribs Monday.

It was the Nets' lowest score of the season.

Nuggets 114, Raptors 107

In Toronto, Denver coach George Karl brought up his 900th regular-season victory as the Nuggets downed Toronto.

Nene scored 21 points to lead the Nuggets.

76ers 100, Clippers 92

In Los Angeles, Philadelphia held off Los Angeles to snap a four-game losing streak.

Andre Iguodala had 28 points, seven rebounds and seven assists for the Sixers.

The Clippers tied the game with 3-1/2 minutes remaining but could not keep it up and lost their fifth successive game.

Thunder 107, Warriors 100

In Oklahoma City, the home team notched just the fourth win of its miserable debut season, defeating Golden State.

Jeff Green scored 26 points, including 18 in the second half, and Kevin Durant added 25 in recording his fifth double-double of the season, adding 10 rebounds.

Golden State shot 54 percent from the field in the opening half, but failed to make a field goal in the first five minutes of the third quarter, allowing Oklahoma City to take control of the game.

NBA BRIEFS

Rockets re-sign Mutombo

HOUSTON (AP)—The Houston Rockets re-signed 42-year-old center Dikembe Mutombo for the remainder of the season on Tuesday, adding an emotional leader and a backup to Yao Ming. Mutombo, who supplants 39-year-old Sam Cassell as the league's oldest active player, appeared in 39 games for Houston last season, logging most of his minutes after Yao broke his left foot in February. Mutombo averaged five rebounds, three points and 1.2 blocks. He became a free agent after last season and contemplated retirement before deciding to come back for an 18th season. The Rockets dropped to 20-12 on Monday after an embarrassing 89-87 loss to Washington. Nearly every player on the Houston roster has missed games due to injury this season and Yao has sat out at least 25 games because of injuries over the past three seasons. Mutombo started 25 games last season, mostly after Yao broke his foot, and averaged 16 minutes per game. The Rockets traded Steve Francis to Memphis on Christmas Eve, creating salary space to add Mutombo, the NBA's second career shot blocker behind Hakeem Olajuwon. The Rockets play Milwaukee on Wednesday and Mutombo is expected to join the team, though it's not known when he'll start playing again.

Krstic joins Thunder after Nets don't match offer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—The New Jersey Nets declined to match Oklahoma City's offer sheet to former first-round pick Nenad Krstic, giving the Thunder another 7-footer in their search for a reliable center. The 24th overall pick in 2002, Krstic was playing in Russia when the Thunder extended an offer sheet to him last week. The Nets had a week to match it since Krstic was a restricted free agent. "He is someone that we feel helps this team both in the short and long term," Thunder general manager Sam Presti said Tuesday in a statement. "We are excited that he will be a part of the Thunder as we continue to build our team here in Oklahoma City." The Thunder hope Krstic will provide steady play at the core of a struggling offense that's next to last in the NBA in scoring, and also serve as the team's last line of defense. He's the latest in a long line of 7-footers to get a tryout with the franchise. The team, formerly the Seattle SuperSonics, burned first-round draft picks on 7-footers Robert Swift, Johan Petro and Mouhamed Sene in the past few years. Another 7-footer, Steven Hill, was waived to make room for Krstic. Krstic averaged 11.3 points and 5.7 rebounds in four seasons in New Jersey, but his time was cut short two seasons ago when he tore a ligament in his left knee. He had been averaging 16.4 points and 6.4 rebounds in that final season before his injury.

Boozer to have arthroscopic surgery on left knee

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Utah Jazz forward Carlos Boozer will undergo arthroscopic surgery on his left knee. Boozer has missed 21 straight games because of a strained quad tendon he sustained during a Nov. 17 game against Milwaukee. The Jazz said in a statement Tuesday that a date for the surgery has not been set, but doctors said it likely wouldn't occur until Jan. 9. Boozer, who had been averaging 20.5 points and 11.7 rebounds, will continue rehabilitation until then. The Jazz face the Lakers in Los Angeles on Friday.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	28	5	.848	_
New Jersey	15	17	.469	12 1/2
Philadelphia	13	18	.419	14
New York	12	18	.400	14 1/2
Toronto	12	20	.375	15 1/2
Southeast Division				
Orlando	25	7	.781	_
Atlanta	21	10	.677	3 1/2
Miami	17	13	.567	7
Charlotte	11	21	.344	14
Washington	6	24	.200	18
Central Division				
Cleveland	26	5	.839	_
Detroit	19	11	.633	6 1/2
Milwaukee	15	18	.455	12
Chicago	14	18	.438	12 1/2
Indiana	10	21	.323	16

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division				
New Orleans	19	9	.679	_
San Antonio	20	11	.645	1/2
Houston	21	12	.636	1/2
Dallas	19	12	.613	1 1/2
Memphis	10	22	.313	11
Northwest Division				
Denver	21	12	.636	_
Portland	20	12	.625	1/2
Utah	19	14	.576	2
Minnesota	6	25	.194	14
Oklahoma City	4	29	.121	17
Pacific Division				
L.A. Lakers	25	5	.833	_
Phoenix	18	12	.600	7
Golden State	10	24	.294	17
L.A. Clippers	8	23	.258	17 1/2
Sacramento	8	24	.250	18

Thursday's Games

Orlando 113, Chicago 94
Detroit 83, New Jersey 75
Houston 85, Milwaukee 81
Denver 114, Toronto 107
Oklahoma City 107, Golden State 100
Philadelphia 100, L.A. Clippers 92

By The Associated Press

Wong, Staal joining Jr. Pan Pacific meet

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Tsunami SAIPAN

After their record-breaking swims in the 2008 Guam International Swim Meet last month, Tsunami Swimming Center Saipan's Rezne Wong and Kai Staal are facing a bigger and tougher tournament in Guam next week.

Wong and Staal will be competing in the 2009 Junior Pan Pacific Championships, which Guam will be hosting from Jan. 7 to 12.

Besides Guam and CNMI swimmers, the six-day meet will also feature tankers from the mainland, Japan, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Mexico, Guatemala, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macau, and Palau.

Wong and Staal were the only two swimmers from the Commonwealth who qualified for the 18-and-under swimming championships having achieved at least a Triple A time in the Guam Swimming Federation qualifying standard times.

Wong' s CNMI National Record in the 100m breaststroke (1:10:21) is even past the Four As in GSF standard (1:11.52). His time is about seven seconds behind the Olympic B time.

Wong's 2:30.54 mark in the 200m breaststroke (another CNMI record) is also under the Four As time (2:35.00) and is more than 12 seconds behind the Olympic B time.

Swimmers who achieved Four As time can compete in World Championships and Pan Pacific Championships. Triple A time will bring swimmers in the East Asia, Oceania Junior, and Pac Pacific meets. Double A time is good for South Pacific Games and Mini SPG, while an A time is for Micronesian Games.

Staal's 2:07.15 time in the 200m freestyle in Guam last month is not only a new CNMI mark in the boys' 13 to 14 age group, but was enough to earn him a Triple A time (2:09.46).

His 25.68 seconds in the 50m split in the 200m freestyle relay in the All Schools meet in November was past the Four As mark (26 seconds) and is just more than two second behind the Olympic B time.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kai Staal, left, and Rezne Wong will represent the CNMI in the 2009 Pan Pacific Championships in Guam next week.

Staal's 57.46 seconds in the 100m freestyle, also recorded in the All Schools meet, qualified for a Triple A time range (58.66 seconds).

Tsunami Saipan coach Hiro Kimura said the club is looking for more record-setting performances from Wong and Staal in the Pac Pacific meet next week.

"In swimming, the most important thing is not the color of medal, but the content—that is if medal is worth the record," he said.

"Even if the swimmer won the gold medal, there is no value in such a thing at all if the time is slower than the previous record," Kimura added.

CNMISA annual membership meeting Tuesday

CNMI Softball Association will hold its annual membership meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium conference room.

Topics to be discussed will include upcoming leagues and activities as well as election of officers and board members as mandated by Article IV and V of the bylaws.

CNMISA's Robert Guerrero is urging members and other interested individuals to attend the *tete-a-tete*.

For more information about Tuesday's CNMISA annual membership meeting, contact association president Manny Tenorio at 285-8366. ***(PR)***

Round Two Wednesday 8-ball reset to Jan. 7

Round Two Bar and Grill hopes to revive pool play at the Garapan landmark with its Wednesday 8-ball tournament.

Coordinator Boyet Sequico said the competition will start on Jan. 7 at 7pm. Entry fee for the Round Two 8-Ball Open Tournament is $10 and the winner will get a handsome cash prize and a trophy from organizers.

For more information about the Round Two 8-Ball Open Tournament, call Ricky Vertudez at 234-6930. ***(PR)***

MULLINS

From Page 28

There is no doubt that the host of the next Championships will have to go a long way to match the superb event we witnessed on Saipan. Oceania Athletics Association looks forward to returning to Saipan in the near future for many more athletics events," said OAA executive director Yvonne Mullins in a recent email to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Last year's area championships and Grand Prix attracted more than 250 athletes from 19 nations in the Pacific. It was held from June 23 to 28, mostly at the Oleai Track and Field. The Laolao Bay Golf Resort was also utilized for the cross country event.

New Zealand topped the medal standings with 17 gold medals to go along with its 10 silver and six bronze.

Fiji leapfrogged past proverbial runner-up Australia in the medal standings, winding up with 11 gold medals as well eight silver and three bronze.

Samoa was another country that finished ahead of powerhouse Australia, finishing with 10 gold, three silver, and a bronze.

Australia, meanwhile, closed out the area championships with nine gold, 11 silver, and five bronze medals to its name.

Papua New Guinea came away with nine gold, six silver, and five bronze medals, while New Caledonia finished with a haul of four gold, three silver, and two bronze medals.

Making up the rest of the medal standings were Guam (4 gold, 6 silver, and 13 bronze), Tahiti (4-6-5), Cook Islands (2-3-5), Tonga (1-7-5), CNMI (1-6-9), Solomon Islands (1-2-2), Kiribati (1-1-2), Norfolk Islands (1-0-1), Palau (one silver), Vanuatu (two bronze), and Nauru (one bronze).

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and third, respectively.

Rollers A won its first playoff match topping the Ol'Aces, 102-95, while the fourth-seeded Sonics stunned the Sixers, 121-112.

The Sonics and Rollers A were dueling for the second finals seat yesterday and will face the G-Stars today at 1pm for the championship trophy.

In the girls' 18-and-under division, the Lady Knights and Lady Ayuyus set their title showdown after prevailing over MHS I, 64-55, and MHS II, 80-77, respectively.

The girls' 18-and-under finals will be played at 11:30a.m.

In the boys' 14-and-under division, Sixers I pounded sister team Sixers II, 110-54, to secure the first finals seat.

The Sixers I will battle the boys' 14-and-under crown against the Lil' Sonics, who edged Rollers A in the other semis match, 88-75.

The boys' 14-and-under finals game between the Lil'Sonics and the Sixers I is set for 10am today.

Girls 18-and-under

Lady Knights 64 – Duenas 24, Calvo 18, N. Lebria 12, Joseph 8, Williams 2.

MHS 1 55 – Tacliad 19, Pagarao 15, Wonenberg 12, Padilla 6, Rangamar 4.

Scoring by halves: 30-26, 64-55.

Lady Ayuyus 80 – Repeki 24, Yvonne Bennett 16, Diaz 16, Meda 13, Hofschneider 9.

MHS 2 77 – Rangamar 41, Duhig 12, Palero 8, Benavente 6.

Scoring by halves: 34-32, 80-77.

Boys' 14-and-under

Lil' Sonics 88 – Darag 21, Macaranas 16, Escalada 16, Yap 16, Dela Cruz 8, Limes 6, Salas 4, habijan 1.

Rollers A 75 – Vertudez 28, Deleon Guerrero 16, Igitol 7, Diaz 6, Palacios 6, Baka 3, Orejola 2, Gabrido 2.

Scoring by halves: 41-34, 88-75.

NFL

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their loaded and high-profile roster, began the season as the betting favorite to win the NFC, not to mention the darling of every stargazing fan and media anointer with an interest in the NFL. Yet, Sunday's TKO in Philly prevented the Cowboys from even making the playoffs, qualifying them as a stunning failure. Afterward, the great Terrell Owens said, "I don't have all the answers but I'd love to be part of the solution."

Any solution should include, early on, dumping T.O. And maybe owner Jerry Jones will have to dump some problem-child players if he's going to follow through on his threat to keep Coach Wade Phillips. Time and again in the visitors' dressing room after the defeat, Jones told reporters, "There will not be a new head coach."

Well, there ought to be. The Cowboys were certainly underachievers before he arrived but they're a squabbling, petty bunch now. It's silly enough to have T.O and Romo in a late-season tiff over who gets how many passes, but the sight of bad boys Tank Johnson and Pacman Jones jawing at each other Sunday with the Cowboys hopelessly behind ought to be too much even for Jones. The killer was Phillips making the boneheaded decision, down 27-3 and facing fourth-and-inches, to send out the punt team, only to have Romo wave them back to the sideline because at least he knew they had to go for it. What Jones should do, after a couple of weeks to let this disastrous end settle, is have Phillips announce he is "resigning... for the good of the Cowboys" (of course) and send him away with the nice little parting gift of a fully paid contract. Wade Phillips is a pretty darn good football coach, but the Cowboys will never win with him on the sideline because leading this circus is beyond his reach. Anyway, if he returned and started 1-2 in Jones' new palace, Phillips could never outrun all the screams for his head.

For that matter, it's also fair to wonder if the Cowboys can win with Romo at quarterback. For all his considerable skills, Romo has spectacular failings in December and January, whether it's botching a hold for a field goal or throwing interceptions or fumbling. Romo's late-season resume suggests he belongs more to the Cardinals or Bears than the once formidable Cowboys.

At any rate, all those people jumping off the Cowboys' bandwagon have to land somewhere. A good many will latch onto the Eagles, who can win when Andy Reid deigns to run the ball and who won't when he wants to throw it 75 percent of the time. Who would have guessed only a week ago when the Eagles lost to the Redskins tht we'd see Reid, whose expression hasn't changed in 10 years, gesturing for the fans in The Linc to make more noise?

Personally, I want a seat on the Ravens' bandwagon. Baltimore plays, to borrow an expression from ESPN's Ron Jaworski, "manhood football." The Ravens bear little resemblance to the 11 other teams in the playoffs, who (except for Pittsburgh) are grounded in offense. Though the Baltimore offense is coming along under rookie quarterback Joe Flacco and a rhino of a running back named Le'Ron McClain, the Ravens are still at their best when Ray Lewis and Ed Reed are destroying offenses. It's truly fun to watch the Ravens play defense. On a local note, it's also amazing that the Ravens have won a Super Bowl since the Redskins were even close to being in one, and could get back with an entirely different team and coaching staff before the Redskins catch a whiff. (That said, the Redskins need to stay the course for the foreseeable future. The Detroit Lions need to change. The Redskins need to work hard and get better.)

The Ravens, though they are only the No. 6 seed in the AFC, are perfectly capable of taking out the Dolphins Sunday in the playoffs because they can mangle quarterbacks and cover the best of receivers, and do it without bickering or posturing or promising everybody how great they'll be without ever delivering. Then again, that is exactly what separates the regular-season pretenders, like Dallas and Tampa Bay and Denver, from the serious contenders who will get down to serious work Saturday.

GHASIAS

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first four matches.

Four more teams—Islanders, Soul Rebels, FSM Rebels, and No Mercy—joined the Naturals in the showers, while the Okies, Ghasias, Evenflow, and the Fanians were left to battle for the title.

Rocball is created by James Feger and is a unique sport as it combines the rules of volleyball and soccer. It is played in a slightly modified standard volleyball court with an overhead net bisecting team courts and a 6x12-foot soccer type goal located 10 feet behind each court. The sport uses a scoring system where a team could win a game by total amount of points scored using a set system of play.

Broncos: great offense but a mess on defense

Mike Shanahan's successor in Denver will inherit an explosive offense that might be one healthy running back away from greatness.

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Sports

Sanchez, USC beat Penn State in Rose Bowl

Southern California made a strong case of its own to be No. 1.

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Ghasias sweeps Fanians for championship

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Ghasias Brothers and their supporters pose for a group photo after beating the Fanians in the finals of the 2008-2009 World Organized Rocball Community League Tuesday night at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Ghasias Brothers ruled the 2008-2009 World Organized Rocball Community League after sweeping the Fanians in the best-of-three titles series Tuesday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

A 93-85 juiced-out win in Game 2 allowed the Ghasias Brothers to wrap up the short series and regained supremacy in the sport.

In the early years of Rocball league, Ghasias Brothers were a force in the indigenous sport and even topped the league for three straight years.

They took a leave from the league for a couple of years and returned last season with a bang sweeping their first four games.

At the end of the second round of elimination, Ghasias Brothers were at the top of the team standings and had only two losses in 12 games.

They were seeded first in the semifinals and whipped the Okies, 104-78, in the Final Four round to advance to the title match against the Fanians. The Fanians dethroned 2007-2008 champion Evenflow in the other semis pairing, 91-72.

In Game 1 of the finals Monday night, Ghasias needed two extra sets to thwart the hard fighting Fanians and eke out a 113-105 win.

Both teams expected another down-to-the-wire finish in Game 2 with the Fanians needing to win to force a do-or-die Game 3.

But Ghasias Brothers showed their toughest form in the last two sets with Freddie Pelisamen leaping high for powerful kills to end the series after only four sets.

Ghasias won the opening set of Game 1, 28-18. The Fanians recovered in the second set with a 28-14 triumph to take the lead, 46-42.

But Ghasias Brothers regained the driver's seat, 67-66, after a 25-20 victory in the third set, and capped their successful comeback in the league with a 26-19 win in the fourth set.

Twelve teams joined last season's Rocball league. The list included the Islanders, Naturals, No-Mercy, Uraiwak, Soul Rebels, Section A, FSM Rebels, and Prims.

The Prims, Uraiwak, and Section A were booted out of the tournament after the first round losing four games apiece.

The nine remaining teams advanced to the second round with the Naturals becoming the first casualty having dropped their

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Five teams advance to Holiday Hoops finals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The championship pairings in two divisions in the 2008 Annual Christmas Basketball Jam Festival were completed yesterday, while defending champion G-Stars earned a return trip to the finals.

The G-Stars, who won over the Sonics in the 2007 edition of the annual caging, 62-60, advanced to the finals of the boys' 18-and-under division after walloping Rollers B, 106-73, in the playoffs yesterday at Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Also claiming finals tickets were the Lady Knights and Lady Ayuyus in the girls' 18-and-under division and the Lil'Sonics and the San Antonio Sixers in the boys' 14-and-under age group.

The G-Stars were seeded first in the playoff with their 3-0 record in the pool play and were paired with the last-seeded Rollers B with the winner of the match automatically gaining finals entry.

Rollers A and the San Antonio Sixers were also unbeaten in pool play with identical 3-0 slates and were seeded second

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The Sonics' Tristan Ecalnea goes up for a shot against Rollers A's Don Teregeyo during their semis match in the boys' 18-and-under division of the Holiday Hoops yesterday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Mullins eyes future hosting duties for Saipan

Mullins

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

The successful staging of the 2008 Oceania Championships and Grand Prix has the head of the Oceania Athletics Association looking again at Saipan as a possible host for future track and field events.

"The Championships were a great event for the Oceania area with the athletes of Micronesia enjoying a successful area championships. The organization of the event was unsurpassed, by both the local organizing committee and the CNMI government.

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By MICHAEL WILBON
The Washington Post

NFL Theater

There was simply too much drama to digest in an eight-hour span Sunday, from a concussed Ben Roethlisberger being carted from the field in Pittsburgh to Tony Romo symbolically collapsing in the shower of the visiting dressing room in Philly to the Patriots winning their 11th game of the season and missing the playoffs to the Chargers playing like perhaps the best team in football just to reach 8-8 and sneak into the playoffs.

By 11 p.m. Sunday the Browns had fired their GM, the 49ers had hired on a full-time basis their interim coach, the Lions had become the first team to lose all 16 games in a season and seven teams that missed the playoffs last year had played their way into the 2008 postseason. By 10 a.m. today, the Lions, Jets and Browns had fired their coaches.

Rarely has the NFL finale provided theater at such a high level, and so much of it. The regular season finally ended when Norv Turner, who probably deserved to be fired a month ago, got a celebratory Gatorade bath after his Chargers hung 52 points on a Broncos team whose end-of-season choke lasted an unprecedented three weeks.

Even so, it doesn't rank with Dallas' meltdown the last two weeks, an epic gag that has pretty much exposed the current bunch of Cowboys as total frauds. Five Dallas turnovers, three by Romo, led to a 44-6 beatdown by the Eagles and the Cowboys' ninth consecutive loss in season finales. The Cowboys, with

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